







A SWAGSMAN.













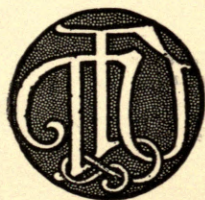






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Æ MISSING FRIENDS Æ

BEING THE ADVENTURES  
OF A DANISH EMIGRANT  
IN QUEENSLAND (1871-1880)

ILLUSTRATED

LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN,  
PATERNOSTER SQUARE. MDCCCXCII





## INTRODUCTORY.



WAS born in Copenhagen in the year 1850. My father was a builder there in moderately good circumstances. I was the second son of a large family, and it was my parents' great ambition that we all should receive a good education. My eldest brother was intended for a profession, and I was to be, like my father, a builder, and to take up his business when old enough to do so.

My father ruled us with an iron hand. I am sure he had as much love for us all as most fathers have for their children, but it was considered necessary when I was twenty years old to treat me as boys of ten are ordinarily treated. During the time I learned my trade in my father's shop I never knew the pleasure of owning a sixpence. After I had learned my trade, it was just the same. I worked for my father and received my food, clothes, and lodging as before, but I never dared to absent myself for a quarter of an hour even without asking permission, and that permission was as often refused as granted. A rebellious

feeling kept growing up in me ; but I dared not ask my father to relax a little and give me more liberty. To assert my independence before him seemed just as impossible, and yet my position had become to me unbearable. There was but one thing to do, viz., to run away, and I had scarcely conceived this idea before I carried it into execution.

I was now twenty-one years old. One evening, after saying good-night to my parents in the usual orthodox fashion, I went to my room, and when all was still, crept downstairs again and left the house. I had a bundle of clothes with me and a watch, which I pawned next morning. I forget the exact amount I received for it, but to the best of my recollection it was the first money I ever possessed, and it seemed to me a vast sum to do with just as I liked. I dared not to stay in Copenhagen for fear of meeting my father, or somebody who knew me, so I bought a through ticket for Hamburg the same day, and although the purchase of this ticket nearly exhausted my funds, it was with a feeling of glorious freedom that I left Copenhagen. On arriving in Hamburg I obtained work at my trade without difficulty, and soon saved a little money, so that a few months after I found myself on board an emigrant ship bound for Queensland, where I have been ever since ; but for fourteen years I never wrote home. After that interval I sent a short letter to my eldest brother, telling him that I was in Queensland, married, in good health, my own

master, but that I had not made my fortune ; however I owed nobody anything, and was satisfied, &c., and asked only for news.

By return of mail came two letters, one from my father and the other from my brother. My brother wrote that our father was now getting to be an old man, and that his one sorrow these many years had been what had become of me, coupled with the fear that I did not remember him as a loving father ; that he had always acted as he thought best for us, and that the greatest joy the earth could offer him would be if he might see me again. My father wrote in the same strain, adding that if I could not come home I must write, and that nothing I had done would seem trivial or uninteresting for him to read about.

When I had read these letters my conscience smote me. Not that I had ever felt indifferent to my parents. I had thought of them often. I do not think ever a day went over my head during those fourteen years in which I did not remember them. Yet I had never written. But I was now a married man, had children of my own, and I could fully realize how it is that the parents' love for their children is so inconceivably greater than children's love for their parents. Would it not be a hard day for me if ever I should have to bid good-bye to any of my sons, even if they went out of the front door, so to speak, with my blessing ? Would the least they could do be to write to me circumstantially and often what they thought, what they



did, how they fared? And here was I who never to that moment had been conscious of having done my parents any wrong! Yes; I would write. I began the same evening, and kept writing on about all my wanderings from the day I had left home up to the time of writing, and as I wrote, many things which I thought I had forgotten came clearly to my mind; and so I grew interested in it myself. I had my writing copied. All this took time; but at last the manuscript was posted to my father with a large photograph of myself enclosed. It arrived the day after his death, but before the funeral. They buried the manuscript and photograph with him.

These are matters far too sacred to write much about, even anonymously. I only touch upon them to show the origin of the following narrative. The copy I had taken has been lying in my desk now for some years, and when I took it out the other day it occurred to me that as it gives a faithful picture of life that thousands of people lead here in Queensland, it might be of general interest. I doubt if ever a book was written with more regard to truth. I have added nothing to the original manuscript, but I have erased such private matters as, of course, would be out of place in a publication, and I have also considerably shortened the description of the voyage out, as a voyage across the sea is a more than twice-told tale to most Australian people. I have also altered the names of persons and places mentioned wherever

I have thought it necessary. It is now several years since the events recorded happened. The incidents themselves are sometimes trifling and always harmless. Should any one who may read this book think they recognize themselves in any part of my descriptions, I must beg them to accept my apology. They will most likely then also recognize the substantial truth of my description and my endeavour not to be too personal.

Although it will be seen by the reader that I have often acted foolishly and seldom excelled in wisdom, yet I do not wish it to be understood that I consider my life altogether misspent. As I look back, I think of myself as being always cheerful. It is the privilege of youth to be happy under almost any circumstances, and I was young when these things I here set down happened. If the tale has a moral, I think it will be found sufficiently obvious. Queensland is full of missing friends. Some come to the colony in the hope of making a speedy fortune, that they may go home again and bless the old folks with their good fortune. Others come out with the hope of making a good home, and to bring the old people thither. The successful man is generally a dutiful son too, insomuch, at least, that he lets everybody know of his success; but the man who fails, either from lack of perseverance or from untoward circumstances, too often becomes a "missing friend." It is generally true that a man is valued according to the cut of his coat, but it is not true between parent and son.

So! write home, you lonely swagsman on the dusty track of the far interior. Do not think yourself forgotten. If you have parents alive you have friends too, who think of you night and day. If you will only let them know that you yet have a thought left for them, they will bless you.

I have nothing else to add to this introduction, except that possibly the book might have been more interesting if it contained more thrilling adventures, but in my opinion the only merit which it may possess lies in the strict regard paid to truth and the avoidance of all exaggeration from beginning to end.



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*CHAPTER I.*

*MY FIRST EXPERIENCES ON LEAVING HOME.*







## CHAPTER 1.

### MY FIRST EXPERIENCES ON LEAVING HOME.



HAVING left Copenhagen in the way just described and arrived in Ham-  
burgh, my first care was to get  
work, which I fortunately obtained  
the next day. The place I worked  
in was a large building or series of  
buildings, four or five stories high, with cabinet-  
makers' shops from the cellars to the loft. We  
had to be at work at six o'clock in the morning,  
and to keep on till eight o'clock at night. Even  
on Sundays we worked from six o'clock to dinner-  
time. Some would keep on till it was dark on  
Sunday evening, and content themselves with  
knocking off early, as they called it. And such  
work! Everybody would work as if the house  
were on fire. It was all piecework. The man  
who stood next myself had made veneered chests  
of drawers for thirty years, and never had made  
anything else. He would turn out two veneered  
chests of drawers in a week, and the work was  
faultless. These chests would, I am sure, sell  
readily in Brisbane for from twelve to fifteen

pounds each. He earned about nine Prussian thalers per week. On the other side of me stood a man who made German secretaires. There were nine or ten men in the shop. The master was working too. He seemed just as poor as the men. Whenever work was finished, some furniture dealer would come round and buy it. The men seemed all more or less askew in their bodies with over-work. If ever they had an ambition in their lives, it was to instil a proper sense of respect into the two apprentices. I did pity these two boys. They received their board and lodging from the master, but they could, I am sure, easily have made one meal out of their four daily allowances. They slept in a corner of the shop. They had, of course, to be at work at six o'clock in the morning the same as the men, but while we had half an hour for breakfast and "vesperkost," they were supposed to eat and work at the same time. After work-hours at night they had to carry all the shavings out of the shop to the loft above, from which they were occasionally removed; then they had tea, and finally, if they liked, they were allowed to work a couple of hours for themselves. They would get odd pieces of veneer and wood and make a workbox. When it was finished, they would one evening run round among the furnishers from door to door to sell it. The dealer would know that the materials were not paid for, and of course he did not pay them. A shilling or less is the price a dealer in Hamburg pays for one of

those beautiful workboxes which are sold all over the world. I wonder how often the buyers of these boxes think of the lean, ragged youth who has stood late in the night and made it, most often perhaps to buy an extra morsel of bread from the proceeds—because, as a matter of fact, that was what these two boys used to do. The master was accustomed to beat them daily, and if he was at any time thought too sparing with the rod, and thereby neglecting their education, the men would themselves beat the lads. It was winter-time, and daylight only about eight o'clock in the morning. But in order to reach the shop at six o'clock, the men, who lived mostly in the suburbs, had to be up at half-past four. I had rented a small room from one of them, and he and I would generally arrive together. As we scrambled our way up the dark staircase, he would caution me to walk softly because, as he said, he wanted to catch these rascally boys in bed. Poor fellows! If we were the first to arrive they would most often lie in a heavy sleep. Then he would rush at them, tear the bed-clothes off them, box their ears, and call them all sorts of *endearing* names. The master and the other men, with scarcely an exception, approved of this. It was not breakfast-time before eight o'clock, and very often when the apprentices had been hunted to work in this manner they would get another correction before then for neglecting to wash themselves! Poor fellows, they had no time. But, as is well known, the harder an



apprenticeship a boy has served, the more cruel does he in his turn become after his time is out. The Prime Minister himself has not, I am sure, half as serene a contempt for an apprentice, as a journeyman only three months out of his apprenticeship.

This work in Hamburg certainly did not suit my ideas of liberty. My head would swim of an evening when I came out of the shop. As already stated, I had rented a small room from one of the men for a mere trifle, and I boarded myself, and very frugal fare I had. This self-denial was because I soon made up my mind that I would not stay in Hamburg; and so I saved all that was possible, and it did not take long before I could commence to count a few thalers in my pocket.

On Sunday evenings I used to go and sit in one of the public gardens, and listen to the music and watch the faces of the people there. Sometimes when there was a free show I would be there too, but I never spent any money. With the din of the shop scarcely out of my ears, and Monday morning looming only a few hours away, I almost fancied myself of a different species from such happy, chattering crowds as would pass and repass seemingly without a care in the world. There was not a soul to speak to me. For one thing, I could scarcely make myself understood in German; for another, the men in the shop, who were the only people I knew, if I did go down the street with one of them, conversation had but one subject for

which was sure somehow to turn on the quality of the glue we used. They all had a vast reverence for the furniture dealers, and they were just the people I did not like. I was therefore quite alone. I was also wonderfully homesick. Often and often did I wish that I had never run away, but it seemed to me impossible to go home again, and so I used to sit and speculate on what I had better do. I thought when I had saved a little money I would go to Paris, or Vienna. They were nice places I believed; but of one thing I was certain, and that was that as yet I had not seen anybody I liked as well as myself, or any place I liked so well as my own home!

One Sunday evening as I walked about the streets, I saw in a window a large attractive placard on which was printed in red letters, "Free Emigration to Queensland, Australia." I am certain I had never heard the name of Queensland before, and my impression of Australia was that it was the place to which criminals were sent; I had also read something about gold-diggings in Australia, but it was in the form of a novel, and I did not believe it. I called to mind what I had read in school in the geography about Australia, and I remembered it well. It was only a short paragraph. It ran thus: "Australia. Travellers who come from this distant continent, bring us very conflicting statements. It seems to be a land in which nature is reversed. The leaves are hanging downwards on the trees instead of upwards."

Rivers run from the ocean inland. The interior seems to be one vast lake of salt water. It is the home of the kangaroo and the black swan. Altogether but little is known about it. Captain Cook discovered it in the year 1788. It belongs to England. The Dutch have possessions in the North. It has been used as a penal settlement by England, but this is now abolished. Of late years gold has been found in considerable quantities and in several places. Wool, tallow, and hides are exported. Towns, Sydney and Melbourne."

I can scarcely help laughing to myself now when recalling to mind this piece of information about Australia. It was really an ignorant and disgraceful morsel of information for one of the best schools in Copenhagen to offer to its pupils, but it was all the knowledge I had or could get, and it was not much assuredly to give one any idea what Queensland was like. But somehow I determined to find out what I could for myself. There was gold there that might be more easily got, perhaps, than by making chests of drawers, so the next day I presented myself at the office, and asked for information.

Yes, it was right. The ship would sail in a fortnight. "Did I want to go? Two pounds sterling please. Only three or four tickets left." "Well—I would like a little information." "Information, yes, we have every information. What is it you want to know? You get, to begin with, all your food, and splendid food I can tell you is provided



for you on the whole journey. You also get bed-clothes, and your own knife, spoon, and fork. This will all become your own property on arrival in Queensland. Here is the bill of fare."

I hesitated. "When you have arrived in Queensland," cried my informant, "the Government of that country further engages to board you in a first-class hotel for two or three weeks, free of all cost, while you make up your mind what occupation to engage in, and—here it is in the prospectus, look at this!—they further guarantee to find work for you making roads, for at least two years after." "Do you yourself know anything much about Queensland?" I ventured to ask; "I suppose you never were there?" "I, no, I never was there—I wish I had been, I should not have to stand here to-day. But we have every information. They have found gold-diggings again. Here are the statistics of exports; I will read them for you:—

Marks.	Marks.
Hides, 100,000,000,000,000.	Horns, 1,000,000,000,000.
Wool, 10,000,000,000,000.	Tallow, 10,000,000,000.
Cattle, 1,000,000,000,000.	Horses, 100,000,000,000,000.
Gold, 100,000,000,000.	Silver, 1,000,000,000,000.
Copper, 1,000,000,000,000,000.	Tin, 1,000,000,000,000.

What do you think of that now?"

What I thought was that it was all Latin to me. I did not know why they exported all this wealth, or why they did not keep it at home. No more did the man in the office, I am sure. I asked, did he

think it probable that I should obtain work as a carpenter and joiner, and did he know what wages were going? To that he replied that, of course, I could get work as a carpenter and joiner, and that wages were at least one pound per day, but that if I wanted to go he would have to enlist me as an agricultural labourer, because a whole cargo of carpenters was already engaged, but that undoubtedly it would pay me better to dig for gold myself. I concluded that Queensland was a sort of vast gold-field. I asked what was the cost of living. He said, "If you like to live in an hotel and be waited on hand and foot, of course you can have it at all prices; but if you like to cook your own food, it will cost you nothing. Why man! don't I keep telling you that the cattle are running wild; if you are wise enough to buy a gun before you go, your meat supply is secured when you get there, and all sorts of game are in equal abundance—kangaroos, parrots, and all sorts." I inquired how much, or rather how little, money did he think it indispensable for me to have when I landed. He said as for that, no doubt the less I had, the less chance there was of my being robbed. It would, in his opinion, take some little time for any one to get alongside the people over there, but, once having taken their measure, there was no mistake about the resources of the country. Then, as an afterthought, he added, "In case on your arrival in the country you should decide to establish yourself as a farmer the Government makes you a present of"—I think

it was—"eighty acres of land. This land is the best and richest agricultural land in the colony, and you can pick it out yourself wherever you like best in Queensland. I will give you the order which entitles you to your deeds."

I felt very undecided. I did not buy any ticket, nor did I go to work again that day. I kept roaming about the streets, thinking of Queensland and the information I had received. Wages a pound sterling per day! if I would only work for it—the price of food scarcely anything—cattle running wild—large gold-fields! How was it, then, that there were hotels where people would wait on the immigrants, "hand and foot." What silly fellows those publicans must be; would it not pay them better to work at a trade, or look out for gold? Truly the order of things seemed to be reversed in that country. And eighty acres of their best land would they give me if only I would go! Perhaps horses were running wild as well as cattle. I might be able to catch some and break them in to plough the land. But what about the plough? Surely nobody made ploughs there; I should have to bring that with me. Perhaps there were saddlers. No doubt it would be a good country for a saddler to go to, as it seemed they had so many hides over there that they had to export them. Probably if a saddler wanted materials, all he had to do was to flay a bullock and carry its hide away. But were there bricklayers to build houses? Certainly I could do the carpentry myself; on a pinch I could



do the bricklaying too. Everything seemed so satisfactory. Perhaps I should even find gold enough while I was sinking the foundation for my house to pay for the lot! It need not be such a large piece either. A couple of nuggets, as large only as one brick each, would go a long way. Perhaps, too, if I found them, it would be as well to go home again at once. Then I began to wonder if the fellow in the office would not, if I had asked him, have told me that houses, by careful cultivation, would grow out of the ground themselves in that country. In a word, I gave it up. Perhaps it was all one tissue of falsehood. Perhaps the diggers over there were only trying to get slaves to work for them. That seemed to me more reasonable. Why should the Government of the country make me a present of a large estate? All bosh! But I would go, just to see the land in which swans were black and rivers running from the ocean inland. If I should be caught on my arrival, perhaps I might escape to the interior. There would be no cabinet-maker's shops there, of that I felt certain. The prospectus said that the Government would guarantee to every intending emigrant work on the roads of the colony for two years, if he desired it. I could not think it probable that I desired that, but perhaps it was meant to pay our passage money. Anyhow, I promised myself I should not fail for the want of firearms if I did go, and perhaps we could slay any enemies we found altogether, because undoubtedly

there would be others on board ship who would fight for their liberty. Liberty, delightful liberty! To be the captain of a gang of warriors, half robbers, half gold-miners, roaming over the continent of Australia, seemed a delightful prospect.

This is, I am sure, quite a faithful picture of my wild ideas of Queensland after I had elicited all the information I could get.

The Government of Queensland spends yearly, I do not remember how large a sum, in promoting free emigration. They prepared at great cost, and with elaborate exactness, statistics to show the commercial position of the country. Then they trust all this to the care of some office at home, whose officials know little or nothing about Queensland. The principal in such an office puts a clerk at the counter who has, perhaps, no other qualification for the work than a facility for talking. Fancy a home-bred peasant coming into such a place with the care of a family on his shoulders, and a little money in the bank, and think of the clerk talking to him about gold-fields and firearms and statistics, all the time admitting he never was in the colony himself! I think it is quite enough to prevent any one going out. And yet people of that class are the only class of poor men who really can do well in Queensland, and they are almost the only desirable sort of emigrants for the country itself. The reason is that such a man can, after a very short spell of colonial experience, go on to a piece of crown land, and by residing there for five

years, and making certain improvements thereto, very soon get a living out of the soil, and while keeping his children round him, be independent of everybody. But such people are at a premium in Queensland. On the other hand, the towns out here are crowded with men who seek for light work, and I have no hesitation in asserting that for certain people, such as junior clerks without influence, grocers' and drapers' assistants, second-class tradesmen, &c., it is quite as difficult, if not more so, to obtain a living in Queensland as in Copenhagen. The land order I obtained, and which entitled me to eighty acres of land wherever I chose to take them, I did not consider of any value—in fact I threw it away; so did all the other emigrants on the ship: one might have bought a whole hatful for a dozen biscuits!

But all this is digression. Still, it is a matter which excites considerable interest in Queensland, and as I think of that time, these thoughts come uppermost in my mind. No doubt if I, in the office, had met a man who came from the colony, and who could have advised me and spoken with confidence about the country itself, I should have made up my mind to go in a far less reckless way, and probably I should never have acquired, after my arrival in the country, that roving disposition which I contracted, and which did not leave me for many years, if it has even left me now. Well, I made up my mind to go. I also made up my mind that it was unnecessary for me to work any more



in Hamburg while waiting for the ship, so I took a holiday and went about town every day, spending my money to the last farthing. I had bought a revolver, ammunition, and a long knife. I had bought my ticket too, and so the day arrived when we were all mustered and put on board the ship.



*CHAPTER II.*

*ON THE EMIGRANT SHIP—THE JOURNEY TO  
QUEENSLAND.*





## CHAPTER II.

ON THE EMIGRANT SHIP—THE JOURNEY TO QUEENSLAND.

WHAT a motley crew we were: Germans, Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, a Russian Finn, and an Icclander. There were many nationalities, but in the majority of cases extreme poverty was evident in their dress and stamped upon their faces, and it was easy to see that the same spirit of recklessness which filled me had somehow also been instilled into them. Nearly everybody had guns, revolvers, and knives, which were promptly taken from us as we stepped on board. Then the Germans would sing in their language of the Fatherland they had left, and in overflowing gush, men, women, and children would hang about one another's necks. Everybody acted in such a mad manner as, I am quite sure, he would never have thought of behaving in any time before. Most of the men were drunk, and as it grew dark at night one would seek for the other, and as no one knew the way about, a perfect pandemonium was raging—singing, fighting, blubbering in all languages. I do believe if I had had a sixpence left, I should have spent it in schnapps too,

because my courage had never been tried so hard before. But I had spent my all, and so I made a virtue of necessity, and stood aloof looking round me in silent wonder as to what the end would be.

The prospectus said that the best and most wholesome food would be served out to us in abundance, and to look at the bill of fare one would think it enough to satisfy any gormandizer. But we got nothing at all the first day, and I was unspeakably hungry. The prospectus said also that bed-clothes were supplied to us, and these were already in the bunks—it said mattrass, pillow, sheets, and blanket. The mattrass and pillow were right enough. The sheets it did not matter much about—they were no good at all for their purpose. But the blanket, the only thing we had to cover ourselves with at night on a four months' voyage, was smaller than the size of a little dining-table when it was spread out, about the size of a saddle-cloth and much inferior in quality to anything worthy of the name of blanket I have ever seen before or since. As a consequence, those who had like myself put faith in that part of the promises made us, and who had no other bed-clothes, were compelled when we went to bed at night, to put on all the clothes we had and sleep in them. I slept every night for months at a stretch in my overcoat, woollen comforter around my neck, and the blanket, the all sufficient bed-clothes, rolled round my head !

I did not, as it may be imagined, sleep at all the



first night on board the ship. At break of day the cook came in with a large wooden bowl of hot potatoes, which he put on the table singing out, "Breakfast!" I was thankful because I was very hungry, and I began at once to get out of the bunk so as to lose no time, but I was not half way to the table before a dozen Germans had rushed the dish and stuffed all the hot potatoes into their pockets, their shirts, anywhere. There was not a taste left! We were twenty-six men in that compartment, and now the row of last night began again with renewed vigour. I looked upon it as a lesson in smartness which I should have to learn, and I thought that if I did not learn it soon it would be a bad job. Half of the twenty-six men were Danes—in fact we were fourteen Danes in the compartment against twelve Germans, because I, who hailed from Hamburg, had been classified as a German although I am not. I believe it was a premeditated assault on the potatoes by the Germans, because they were all in it, and not one of the Danes had got a morsel to eat. The twelve Germans gave nothing up. They ate the potatoes intended for us all with great composure while we others were storming at them. Didn't I feel wild!

While the dissatisfaction was at its highest point, somebody we had not yet seen came into the cabin. He was a person with a decided military air about him, and he was also dressed in a gorgeous uniform. Two of the passengers who had already been sworn in to act as police constables during the voyage

came behind him, and in one of his uplifted hands he held a document which he was waving at us. "Halt," cried he. "Halt, Donnerwetter, I say, halt, while I read this paper." All the Germans without an exception had just come from the Franco-German war, and the sight of the uniform and the determined military air about the doctor, as we soon discovered him to be, had the effect of shutting them up in an instant. Some of the Danes were also old soldiers; anyhow, you might have heard a pin drop while the doctor, who also came straight from the war, where he had been army surgeon, read a proclamation, the exact words of which I forget, but which was to the purpose that he had supreme command over us all, and—"Donnerwetter," cried he, "Donnerwetter, I will have order. If you are not amenable to discipline I will handcuff every one of you. What sort of Knechte are you?" This last remark was addressed to a big strapping-looking German who happened to stand close to him. The German stood as stiff as a statute, saluting with the one hand, while with the other he made a slight movement which threw his overcoat a little to one side and displayed a silver cross which he wore on his vest. "Ha!" cried the doctor, greatly mollified, "I see you have served the Kaiser to some purpose. Don't forget you are not outside the Kaiser's law yet. I hope we shall be friends." Then he marched off to read his proclamation in other parts of the ship. These Germans, I found out by degrees,

were not at all bad fellows, but we did not for a long time forgive them the assault on the potatoes, and I have often thought what a peculiar sign of German thrift it was. They had simply taken in the situation more quickly than we; indeed it has become nearly a proverb in Queensland to say that a German will grow fat where other men will starve. After that time order was restored, and no disturbance worth mention occurred on the whole voyage.

Nothing can well be more tedious than a sea voyage of four months under our circumstances. The food was wretched and insufficient, and, as I have already mentioned, most of us had to sleep with all our clothes on us. We did not undress; we rather dressed to go to bed!

There was not a single individual among the passengers who understood English. It is true I had learned English for seven years in school, but when we came ashore it proved that I could scarcely make myself understood in a single sentence. None of us knew anything about Queensland, and many were the surmises and guesses at what the country was like and what we were going to do there. I remember distinctly once a number of us were sitting talking about the colony, and that one ventured to say that he had heard how in Queensland, when journeymen tradesmen were travelling about looking for work, they needed no "wander-book," and travelled about on horseback; whereupon another got up much offended, and said that he



had heard many lies about Queensland, but this last beat all. He did not know so much about the "wander-book," although he had taken good care to have his own in order, but if any one tried to make him believe that beggars went about on horseback over there, then it was time to cry stop. "No," said he, "he knew we should have to walk." We others concurred.

One of my companions, I remember, was a shoemaker, and a religious maniac besides. He would lie in his bunk and pray aloud night and day. It was quite startling sometimes in the middle of the night when all were asleep to hear him in a sactimonious voice chanting a hymn. If the spirit moved him that way, then it was good-bye to sleep for us for a long time after. He would be quite irresistible. Most of us in the cabin were a phlegmatic set who did not mind, but one, a Swiss, was of a very excitable temperament. He was "down" on the shoemaker. When the hymns began in the night one might be quite sure to hear after a minute, from the bunk in which the Swiss lay, a smothered whispered little oath like "Gottferdam." Then ten seconds after he would exclaim in an everyday voice, with, however, an affected resignation, "Gottferdam"; and as the full burden of the sacred song kept rolling on, he would start screaming out of his bunk with a real big "Gottferdam." But the others did not allow him to hurt his enemy. They seemed to agree that even if it was not very nice, yet it must be wicked to

hurt any one for practising his religion ; but I believe that their motives were not quite so pure, because this shoemaker had an inexhaustible fund of anecdote, and if anything were allowed to annoy him in the night, he would tell them no stories during the day. When all went smooth, it was the practice for him to gather a score or two around, the numbers swelling as he proceeded, and then tell a story, something of a sensational sort about love and murder. His whole soul would then be in it, and he gesticulated as if he felt and believed it all. Every Sunday he was always more or less ready to cry out for hunger, and would at such times sit and look right before him straight out into space. Then he would say, "I wish I had a dish of German dumplings. With cherry-sauce, with cherry-sauce. Not the way one gets in the steam-kitchens, but the way my mother used to make it." Then we would get a long description of his mother's recipe for German dumplings. There is no mistake about it, too, we *did* fast on that ship.

In reading over to myself some of these last pages, I am afraid I have given my readers the impression that the people on board, taken as a whole, were a bad lot. If I have done so, it is erroneous. It is true that my first impression of the emigrants was not a good one, and perhaps few among us excelled or were remarkable for anything in particular, but taken as a whole they were honest, hard-working people, and as I became acquainted with them one after another

I found that men of whom I had a very low opinion when we first came on board, were in reality entitled to very much higher estimation.

We did not know anything about the country to which we were going. We had an idea that we were to begin a new life somewhat freer than in the old world, and, simpleminded as we were—because I was just as bad as anybody—thought that when we came on board ship we could dispense with such formalities as those the old world had taught us. That is, I am sure, the true reason why so many emigrants, when they leave home as well as when they arrive in a colony, behave so foolishly as to make one think that they never had known the decencies of life before. It is the same with the English emigrants, only they are more quickly absorbed into the general population. Still the word “New Chum” has in Australia much the same meaning as the word “fool.” I never felt more bitterly ashamed than once, several years after I came to Queensland, when I saw a number of Danish immigrants just arrived. It was in Toowoomba, and I had come down there from up country on some business, when one of the first things I was told was that there were a lot of my countrymen in the depôt waiting for engagements. Toowoomba is about a hundred miles inland, and they had been sent up from Brisbane. Well, I felt quite pleased, and decided at once to go and see them and to speak a kind word to some of them, if I could not do them any other service.



But I came away a great deal less pleased than I had gone. There were some long forms outside the building, and on those forms sat as close as they could find room a score or so of men. Each man had wooden clogs on his feet and a long pipe in his mouth. On his knees sat his girl with her arm round his neck, and there they sat smoking and kissing perfectly regardless of ladies and gentlemen who would walk about looking at them and going on again. One I stood glaring at seemed to me the worst. He was a big ugly fellow, dressed in a blue calico blouse, black trousers and wooden clogs. In his hand he had a pipe five feet long, but on his head he had a sugar-bag. These sugar-bags are of straw and about two feet six inches in length. He had tied in the corners to fit his head. This gentleman would rush about and look in at the doors of houses, throwing side glances in all directions with the evident desire to attract attention. At last he stood in the middle of the street singing an old Danish song and jerking his body about like a maniac. I could not contain myself, so I went up to him and asked him if he did not think he was ugly enough already without trying to make himself still more so, and what did he mean by sticking that sugar-bag on his head?

“Oh,” cried he, quite unconcerned, “here we are right up on the top of these blue mountains, that does not matter. It is a first-rate straw-hat. Does it not look nice? Why! this is a free country,” &c.

One very conspicuous figure on board the emigrant ship was the Iclander, Thorkill; he was so unlike anybody else that I would like to describe him, especially as he became my mate in Queensland and we became close friends. His eyes were bluer and his complexion clearer than that of any one else I ever saw. He had long yellow curly hair, and a big yellow beard. He was himself also big and strong, and about twenty-eight years of age—altogether I should say, as far as appearance went, the beau ideal of a man. But as no one is perfect, so had he also a grievous fault, viz., a certain softness, like a woman. He always spoke as with a comma between each word, and although he had plenty of good sense and was, like all Icelanders, well educated, yet he would, I believe, give most people the impression that he was not fit to battle with a wicked world. I often wondered what might have brought him on board that ship, but he was very reticent about his own affairs. Meanwhile I have never known anybody whose mind was so pure, whose thoughts were so lofty as his. But he was unpractical, to a degree. He claimed to know all his ancestors from the twelfth century, when they had emigrated from Norway to Iceland, and he said his father still farmed the same land. Unless as a professor in ancient folklore, I do not know what Thorkill was good for. I had, in school, learned much Icelandic folklore, and to see his eyes sparkle with joy when he discovered this and knew that I was interested

in it besides, did me real good, and so we agreed that during the voyage we would refresh each other's memory in "Sagamaal." He arranged to teach me the whole complete "Rümi Kronike." So we bribed the fellow who lay next to me (we had double bunks) to exchange berths with Thor-kill, and he and I then lay together, and there we were telling "Sagamaal" from morning to night and sometimes the whole night through. He would make me tell him one of the "Sagas" I knew, although he knew it far better himself, just to see if I had mastered it properly. He would listen with all his might, then he would say: "Excuse—me—for—interrupting you—but—are—you—sure—that—you—are—correct—in—describ-ing—Sharpedin—the—son—of—Hakon—as—a—longbearded—man. The—Rümi Kronike—does—not—say—so—on—the—contrary." Then we would have a long argument about that, Thorkill insisting upon the importance of being exact.

He wrote a splendid hand, but from the pedantic ungainly way in which he took hold of anything, I made sure he was not a good worker. He had studied scientific farming at the agricultural college in Copenhagen, and afterwards had been, he said, a sort of overseer on a large farm on the island of Als. Whether he had given satisfaction at that or not, I did not know, but what was the good of all his knowledge, supposing he had any, when he did not understand English, had no friend nor money, and was a bad worker? One day I said to him:



“Thorkill, do you ever try to draw a real picture to yourself of how we shall get on when we come to Queensland? I am thinking of this, there are, according to what we have been told, no more people in all Queensland than there is in a good-sized street in Copenhagen, and here are all these people on board ship who will be, the moment they land, ravenous in their competition for something to do, and another ship has sailed from Hamburg a week after us. How will they fare? I cannot solve it. But it strikes me very forcibly that if the sail of this ship were set for Copenhagen harbour instead of Queensland, the only solution to the problem there would be for the police to have some large vans in readiness and to give us a drive in them straight out to the workohuse.” “Oh say not so,” cried Thorkill, “say not so. God will protect us. You and I will never part.” “No,” cried I, in the fulness of my heart, “we will stick together, and we will get something to do too, you will see.” And then, with a new sense of responsibility on me, I would talk to him cheerfully about Queensland, and the opportunities there would be to do well for both of us, which could not fail, but meanwhile I would rack my brain with thinking about how to make a few shillings to land with. I had not got a cent, and I knew very well that Thorkill had nothing either. It was a bad place I was in for making money, for there was not much of it on the ship, but I now very much regretted that I had spent all that I had before I came on

board. Here were all these empty bottles lying about the ship which nobody seemed to claim. Why, thought I, they must be worth a little fortune in Queensland. Good idea! We will collect them all. I communicated with Thorkill. "Oh," said he, "you—will—make—your—fortune—in—Queensland. They must be worth a mint of money. But is it right to take them? What—a—business—ability—you—have—got. Nobody seems to want them. I think we might have them."

So then we went about begging and borrowing empty bottles everywhere, without letting anybody know for what we wanted them, and we piled them up in our bunks so that we could scarcely get into them; then people, when they saw what we were after, put a price on the bottles and came to us to sell. So Thorkill bought five shillings' worth on my recommendation, all the money he had, and still they came with bottles, but the firm was compelled to suspend payment. Then I, who was understood to know a little English, opened a class for teaching that language. My pupils had no money, but I took it out in empty bottles, and by and by we had them stacked by the hundred all round about ready for market.

The food we got was so wretched and insufficient that it was scarcely possible to keep body and soul together upon it. I have asked many people since how they fared in other ships, and I have come to the conclusion that our ship was the worst pro-

vided of any in that respect. Indeed, the emigrant ships which leave England are well supplied with everything, even luxuries, for their passengers. But in this ship we were sometimes on the point of despair with hunger. We got our week's supply of biscuits served out once a week. Those who were unable to practise self-restraint, generally ate them in a couple of days, and for the rest of the week subsisted on the so-called dinner which consisted of a couple of mouthfuls of salt pork or mutton, with a little sauer-kraut to keep it company. Our ration of sugar was a small tablespoonful per week to each man. The tea and coffee we got morning and evening was served in the same wooden trough in which we fetched our dinner, and as the sugar ration was, as already stated, served separately once a week and quickly consumed, our beverage was void of any sweetening. But as for me, I never fooled about all the week with my spoonful of sugar; I always put it into the first pint of tea I got. We also got some butter, and we never troubled much either about the quantity or quality of that article. The trouble was that we had seldom a biscuit to spread it on. The prospectus had said that cordials were served out, and in conformity with that every sixteen men received one bottle of lime-juice per week. These were our rations. There was on that account an amount of dissatisfaction on board verging sometimes on open mutiny. The water was also fearfully bad, with inches of froth on it,



but bad as it was, we would drink it as soon as we got it and then feel like dying of thirst sometimes before the time came to serve out the next rations. As a sort of proof of the correctness of this statement, I might mention that one of the passengers had a canary bird which died of thirst because some of us would steal the drop of water in its glass !

I have already written that no disturbance worth mentioning occurred on the voyage. When I wrote that, I forgot an incident which happened when we had been out to sea about a couple of months. The doctor, as I have already stated, was also in command of us. He had been an army doctor in the German army during the Franco-German war, and came straight thence. Whether he made the mistake of thinking he was in command of a convict ship full of criminals, or whether it was that his military training was the cause of it, I cannot say, but in one word, he was boss of that ship. Every now and then somebody would be handcuffed and shut up during his pleasure, without anybody taking much notice ; but one day he went a good deal too far. One of the single girls had been accused by the woman in charge of them of some fault, upon which I need not farther enlarge more than to say that it was trifling, and that the culprit was a very respectable girl, who shortly after her arrival in Queensland got married to a good husband, and that both she and her husband are, and always were, pre-emi-

nently respectable people. The girl was tied with ropes to the mast, with her hands fastened behind her in such a way that she was exposed to the full view of all the six hundred people on board. I was lying in my bunk when a fellow came in very excited, and said, "Look here, chaps, is not this getting red hot? There is that poor girl, so and so, chained to the mast and crying as if her heart would break. What are we coming to?"

The moment I heard there was a girl chained to the mast and crying, I jumped up and registered an oath aloud that she should not stand there one second longer than it would take me to reach the mast. So did every other man who was in the cabin; even meek Thorkill cried out, "It is too bad, too bad." Then I grabbed the wooden trough in which the concoction of roasted peas that passed for coffee was served out in the morning. So did every other man grab at something to strike with—one would take a wooden clog, one a long stick, another a boot, and all something, and in less time than it takes to read this we were all on deck. But to reach the mast was then impossible. The girl had not stood there yet for five minutes, but there was already a surging, impenetrable crowd on the scene of action. As I could not see, and could not content myself to stand still, I jumped up in the rigging, and from there, right enough, I saw the girl and four German constables (passengers who had been sworn in as police) watching her. How shall I describe the scene. It all

seemed to me to happen in one instant. Hundreds of men were yelling from behind at the top of their voices, "Throw them in the sea. Cut her down! Where is the doctor? He shall not live another hour." A dozen men were struggling round the girl, some with the constables, and some of the more moderate among the passengers with the aggressors. One towering fellow, a Dane, had one of the constables by the throat, and the wooden bowl swinging over his head, and held back by another man, who implored him to give the doctor a chance to order the girl's instant removal. The doctor was not on deck, but he came running on now, with a revolver in each hand. He kept on the quarter-deck, but he sang out to the constables to cut her down and take her into the hospital. Somehow that was done, and the doctor walked down the steps from the quarter-deck, turned the key in the lock, put it in his pocket, and faced the crowd.

Did you ever notice two dogs when they meet, and before they begin to fight? How unconcerned they try to look. They will look at anything, anywhere but at one another. So looked the doctor as he stood there with a cigar in his mouth, smoking away and looking at anything but the sea of faces around him. Around him like a solid wall had the men closed, armed with knives, wooden bowls, sticks, &c., and the howl, "Throw him in the sea," kept on from the rear. No doubt the doctor realized that he had gone too far, and he



tried all he could while he stood there not to give further offence, but I watched him particularly from my seat in the rigging. Fear was not in that man. Not a muscle in his face shook, and yet I am certain that his attention was strained to the uttermost, and that the fingers which closed on the triggers of the two revolvers would have caused them to blaze away the moment he had felt any one touch him ever so gently. Behind him again, but up on the quarter-deck, stood the captain and the first mate, with large overcoats on, and their hands in their pockets. I had a suspicion that they also had revolvers—who knows how many—within easy distance.

But it was one thing to see a young woman tied to the mast and crying, and it was (the doctor and his revolver apart) quite another thing to look at a closed door and know that she was there and that no further harm would befall her. But most of the men had a few minutes ago been so excited, that it was not in human nature for them to cool down at once. The man who had when I came on the scene taken the most prominent part, was still the foremost person. He stood within three feet of the doctor, and, as I said already, like a solid wall stood the others armed with divers things; but no one touched the doctor, and no one spoke to him, and there was a sort of undecided silence. Then the leader cried, "Well, what are you waiting for? You said throw him in the sea; just give the word and he shall be overboard in a

second." My heart beat violently. I thought murder would be committed in an instant, and not a single life either, but perhaps scores would be sacrificed. There was a dead silence. The wind whistled through the rigging, but it was the only sound heard. The doctor did not move; the captain did not move; the mate did not move; and none of the men moved. None dared to give the aggressive sign, and each seemed to feel it just as impossible to beat a retreat. It might have lasted a couple of minutes, perhaps less. It seemed an age to me. Then we all heard Thorkill's voice, he was somewhere in the rigging too, and he cried, "Countrymen—listen—to—me! hear—what—I—say! Disperse! Disperse!—quietly. Let—us—complain—when—we—come—ashore! He—will—shoot—the—first—ten—or—twelve—men—who—touch—him—and—those—who—escape—now—might—be—hung—when—we—come—ashore. Let—us—complain—when—we—come—ashore—and—we—will—get—justice." Thorkill still kept on talking, but the outburst of relief from all sides completely drowned his voice. There was an honourable way to get out of it. "We will complain when we come ashore," "Disperse," "Let it be enough," and similar expressions, were heard on all sides, and the doctor, I suppose nothing loth, had quite a pleased appearance as he stepped up on the quarter-deck again as soon as the road was clear, and disappeared out of sight simultaneously with the dispersion of the men.

That day the doctor did not show up again, but on the next, I suppose just to show that he did not consider himself beaten, all the single men were ordered below at sundown as a punishment for insubordination, and with that the matter ended. But now the men were pressing Thorkill to write out a complaint which should embody all we had suffered, and all our supposed wrongs. Thorkill, however, would do no such thing. It was not in his line, he said. Many a talk he and I had about it, but he could not see his way. "All these poor people," said he, "are treated with contempt because they are poor, and I cannot help them for I am just as poor. We do not know to whom to complain; we cannot write English, and what we do will rebound on our own heads. Still," said he, "it—is—a—shame—that—they—should—be—allowed—to—treat—people—like—this." Then I wrote out a complaint in Danish addressed to the Danish Consul, Australia. The exact contents of it I have long since forgotten, but it was to the effect that we had been starved, ill-treated, had had no sick accommodation, insufficient bed-clothes, &c., and from that day I looked upon myself as an important personage on board ship. All the single and married men, with about a dozen exceptions, signed the statement. All the single girls wanted also to sign it, but I feared the woman in charge might confiscate the document (the matron in charge of the girls on our ship was only an ordinary emigrant selected by the doctor,



and in my opinion scarcely the best that might have been selected. In English emigrant ships an educated lady is engaged as matron. Thus I could not bring myself to go among them for the purpose of getting signatures, and so the females were not represented in the complaint. (It might, however, be interesting to English readers, as showing the standard of education on the continent of Europe, that of all the people on board only one, an elderly man, had to sign his name with a cross.)

One day while I was getting these signatures, and the men were coming to where I held my levee as fast as they could, the doctor stormed the cabin with two constables behind him and ordered me to give up the document to him. Then the doctor and I talked, I in Danish and he in German, and we had a wordy war. I liked the doctor in my heart, because he was about as brave a man as one could wish to see, and very likely, too, some of the severe discipline on board was not altogether uncalled for; yet he was not going to have it all his own way, and to this day I maintain that whatever else might have been right or wrong, to starve as we starved was scandalous. I write about these things, and I do not know whether my readers may think them of much interest, but all these little incidents seem engraven upon my memory. On board ship there is nothing to think about or to talk about but the same old things. One is cross, perhaps, and everybody talks much about

the same thing. "Where are we, I wonder?" "I wonder how many knots we are running?" "I wonder how it will go when we come to Queensland?" "I wonder if any one ever was so hungry as I?" So it goes on, day out and day in, and one has to discuss and answer these questions about five hundred times every day.

But now we are nearing Australia, and high time I dare say the reader probably thinks it is; but if my readers are tired out, so were we. Yet there is another of the passengers I must describe, as I intend to mention him again. I will do so in a few words. He was a quiet, gentlemanly man, about thirty years old. He told me he had been a lieutenant in the Danish army, but had been dismissed for insubordination. He managed, without giving offence to anybody, to keep himself completely in the shadow in the ship, and one seemed not to know he was there. I will call him "A." A. understood and spoke English fluently, but nobody knew it. Indeed, when the complaint-fever was on, he denied all knowledge of the language. A young lady was travelling with him—that is, she went as a single girl, but they got married as soon as we came ashore. They had quite a number of things with them to set up house with, and lived for a short time very comfortably on their means; when they went away again I lost sight of them.

*CHAPTER III.*

*MY ARRIVAL IN QUEENSLAND.*





## CHAPTER III.

### MY ARRIVAL IN QUEENSLAND.

NEVER can I forget the joy I felt, a joy universal to all on board the ship, the first day we saw Australia. It was Sunday. The whole night before the ship had cruised about outside Bass's Straits, and at break of day we ran in. We did not know at all we were so near. We had not seen land for three months when we had made out the island of Madeira. Since then, as far as I remember, we had not even passed another ship. In the Indian Ocean, storm, sleet, rain and cold had been the order of the day. This day, the first time for months, the sun was shining brightly, and a crisp, altogether different air fanned our cheeks. It was blowing very strongly, but every sail the ship could carry was spread, so that the ship lay over very much, and we seemed to fly past the land at lightning speed.

This, then, was Australia, our future home—and beautiful it seemed. Land lay on both sides. That on the Australian side was flat, seemingly, but Tasmania showed up with a majestic chain of mountains. I had never seen a mountain before,

nor had any of the other Danes, and we wondered whether anything could grow on them, or whether they were all solid stone. People were so glad, that they ran about and shook one another's hands. Three or four of the passengers had telescopes, and we were all dying to have a long look at the coast. It is amusing to myself to think of the amount of ignorance which really existed among us about the land to which we were going.

"Do you make out anything over there?" one would ask of the man with the telescope. "Yes," came the answer, "it seems all big trees." "Trees, did you say? I am glad of that. I will lay a wager where all those trees will grow, something else will grow." "This is not Queensland, though." "Oh, well, only let me see plenty of big trees when we come to Queensland, then I am satisfied." "Do you think we shall be allowed to cut the trees down?" "I do! they must be glad to get rid of them. Why, it is self-evident that you can take as much land here as you want; here is so much of it and nobody to use it."

"Do you know, I do not believe there is any desert in that land at all!" "No more do I. I am sure there is not. Why should there?" "I am glad I went, now I have seen the land." "So am I."

In another part of the ship, as I walked about, I heard a very dogmatic fellow laying down the law to a lot of married men who were discussing their chances of obtaining employment.



“Why,” cried he, “anyone with a spark of common sense can see at a glance that there must be *plenty* of work in Queensland. Look around you here on the ship. All these people must have shelter, and food, and clothes; I say they must. That gives work—does it not?”

The others did not seem quite convinced by the argument. They appeared to know that there was a missing link somewhere, but, like the Italian smuggler in Charles Dickens’ “*Little Dorrit*,” they kept saying, “*Altro, altro, altro!*”

With such hopeful conversation the day wore away, but before night we were out again in open sea, and for another fortnight we saw no more of Australia. Then we made the coast again and sailed along in sight of land. Once more we were out to sea again. At last one morning before daybreak we dropped anchor, and when daylight came found that we were quite close to land, and right in front of a large flagpole and some neat wooden cottages which stood on the shore. This, then, was Queensland—Moreton Bay, and Brisbane, the capital, lay some miles up the river. A man came from one of the houses and hoisted a flag, then another, and another. Our company thought he did it to do us honour, or in joy for our safe arrival, and in the wildest excitement they screamed hurrah! until they were hoarse. Of course, the man was merely making signals to the town, and a few hours after a small steamer came out, and some live sheep were put on board, also

fruit for the children, and potatoes—sweet potatoes they are called, different from our potatoes at home and much larger.

Kind people! — Good Queensland! — Happy country! No starvation here or smell of poverty. Look at these potatoes, five, six, ten times as large as those we have at home! Who said Australia was a desert? So thought and spoke we while we scanned, with a sort of reverent awe, some ladies and gentlemen who were on board the little steamer, and the pilot who had come on board our own ship. Much to our regret, we found we were not to land here. We were now informed, for the first time on the whole voyage, that our destination was a place called Port Denison, which lies about half way between Brisbane and Cape Somerset, and which was at that time the farthest northern port opened up of any importance.

So now we were off again on our interminable voyage. Only our troubles were over. Alas! for the complaint which I carried in my pocket, we were all as healthy and strong a set of people as any one could wish to see, for since we arrived in Bass's Strait we had been served with plenty of food. Just now we lived on roast meat, potatoes, and pudding every day. I could feel my cheeks grow redder and sleeker day by day. Alas! what should I do? As a public man I was, of course, not allowed to change my opinions, but when I looked at all these fellows gormandizing from morning to night, it seemed to me a sort of treason

to our cause. And what was worse, I bore no ill-will to anybody. Surely the Danish consul, if there was one, would expect to see a lot of emaciated objects when we had been starved so cruelly, and I myself so anxious to get something to do. I might be hindered, and have to travel about more yet, and, if I could not prove the truth, be cast into prison! I often wish the complaint was as nearly forgotten as our troubles seemed to be. Yet, after all the talk there had been, it was too late to draw back. The ship was now for a whole week longer sailing northwards, always in sight of land—often, indeed, so close that we could almost have thrown biscuits ashore. The whole way along was dotted with small islands, which became more numerous the further north we sailed. There must be some thousands of them if they were all counted, but with the exception of a few of the largest which lie near Brisbane, they are nearly all uninhabited.

To look at the coast on the mainland, one would think that the man who said he would be satisfied if he only saw plenty of trees in Queensland, ought to feel contented. It seemed to us one vast forest. Occasionally we saw smoke curling up from among the trees, and at night we could see large fires. This was the dry grass burning among the trees, a very common thing in Queensland, but to us it was a most startling and awe-inspiring sight. We thought that it was the aborigines who were trying to get on to the ship, and that these were



their fires. One night the fires extended for many miles, and a most beautiful sight it was, but no one gave a thought to its being a bush-fire. We simply said, "What a lot of them there must be? Why, there must be more niggers here than there were Frenchmen at Sedan. Look at their fires!" And then we thought it strange that we did not get our weapons back again that they had taken from us when we came on board. I do not think any one was afraid. I myself rather liked the novelty of being so near the "enemy." We would sit and discuss how many we thought we could keep out, supposing, for argument's sake, that they dared to come—and altogether we felt ourselves great heroes.

I have a suspicion that the Queensland pilot who was now in charge of the ship, along with the other quality up on the quarter-deck, were having a laugh at our expense. Anyhow, one evening I happened to come near him I pointed round me and towards the sun, which was just going down, and summoning to my aid all my stock of English I said, "Very nice, Queensland." "Yes," cried he, "it looks beautiful. All that red glow in the sky you see there is the reflection from the gold on the gold-fields."

I could not understand the meaning of what he said, but I looked deferential and thankful for the information all the same, and for fear I had not taken it all in he called the mate and asked him to explain it to me. Probably he thought I be-

lieved it! That same night we sailed in between a mountainous island and the coast, and one of the guns was loaded and fired off. The echo reverberated far and near in a most startling fashion, and perhaps it was for the echo they fired it off, but we were certain that it must have frightened the natives out of their wits. We were even positive we could see them round their fires trying to put them out. Poor harmless aborigines of Queensland! They little know what respect they are held in by new arrivals! It is only familiarity which breeds contempt in their case. In a few more years the last of them will have joined the great majority. After that event has happened, no doubt the bard will sing their praises and descant about their matchless beauty, their enormous strength, and their bloodthirsty cruelty.

We had very little wind in the sails as we came along, and nothing can be thought more beautiful than the climate we now enjoyed. I am now so used to the Queensland climate that I take it as a matter of course, but how can I give the reader an adequate idea of the joy I then felt in the very fact of my existence: the beautiful sun in the day, the glorious sunset in the evening, the full moon, and the sparkling rippling silent water! Then all these islands we passed were so full of mysterious interest, while the vast unknown mainland lay beyond. The reckless spirit of which I spoke as universal when we came on board in Hamburg, seemed now to have taken wings and fled. In-

deed, the main trouble on board just now was how we should make a good impression when we landed. It was looked upon as a matter of honour that each should be on his very best behaviour when we came ashore, and I know of several of whom it was thought by the rest that their clothes were scarcely good enough, and who were lent by the others sufficient to appear in better trim and circumstances. The ship was now so clean that one might have eaten his dinner off the decks anywhere. Altogether there was a decided change for the better since the day we first saw Australia. At last, one day after having sailed along the apparently uninhabited coast for eight or nine days, we suddenly rounded a cliff, sailed into a little bay, and dropped anchor. There lay Bowen in full sight of us, and this was Port Denison. How strange it seemed that these few scattered wooden cottages we saw lying there on the beach in appalling loneliness should be the spot that we, through storm and trouble, had all been trying to reach. For some time not a human being was to be seen. There was a long jetty running out into the water for a great distance, but we did not go alongside. We lay, I think, half a mile out, and we were given to understand that we were not to go ashore before the morrow, and that on landing all our wants would be attended to until we obtained employment. Now it began to look lively on the beach. A lot of people came out on the jetty, and at last a boat, with a dozen gentle-

men in it, got under way and pulled straight for the ship. These are Queenslanders, thought I, men who had fought with the Blacks and been on the gold-diggings. Rich, no doubt they were. Oh, how we screamed hurrah! for them, and how kind they looked as they came nearer, waving their handkerchiefs and smiling in response to our greeting. They were not at all ferocious looking; really much the same sort of people we had seen before. Yet what adventures must they not have gone through; what stories could they not tell if they liked? But, of course, that would be beneath their dignity. At last they were on board. Most of them greeted the doctor and captain in German, being, in fact, Germans. After a short interval, one of the Queenslanders, who proved to be the agent and interpreter employed by the Government to attend to us when we came ashore, got up on a big box and made a long speech in German, exhorting us to do well, and gesticulating with much gusto and great force. He advised us to take the first work we could get, and while we were accommodating ourselves to the new habits of life and customs existing in this country, to try to feel contented. "Where," cried he, "will all of you be in twenty years? Some will be dead; others perhaps alive. Some rich and honoured; others perhaps only servants to those among you who are more pushing or lucky. These little children who are now running about us fighting for an orange, may become members of Parlia-



ment in time. To-day you start with an equal chance, but from to-morrow your fortunes will begin to alter, and for certain not one of you will for ever forget this day ; and no doubt in after years you will look back on to-day often, and as you recall to your mind how your time has been employed, wish you had it over again, that you might act more wisely or become better."

All this was good advice, and very well and kindly spoken. He said much more to the same purpose, but as good advice is everywhere cheap and plentiful, I will not inflict the whole of his carefully prepared speech upon my readers. He spoke for nearly an hour. At last he congratulated us on our clean appearance, wiped his perspiring brow, and the performance was at an end. We were not sorry, to tell the truth—at least I was not, because this was the day on which our best dinner, grey peas stewed with pork, was served out ; and as it was past the usual dinner hour when the sermon was over, not only did I stand right in the tempting smell from the kitchen, but I had also noticed how, gradually, as the speech proceeded, the "skaffers," or men whose duty it was to fetch the food from the cook's galley, had one by one crept away, and now they stood in a long row ready with their wooden troughs while the cook began to dish up the peas.

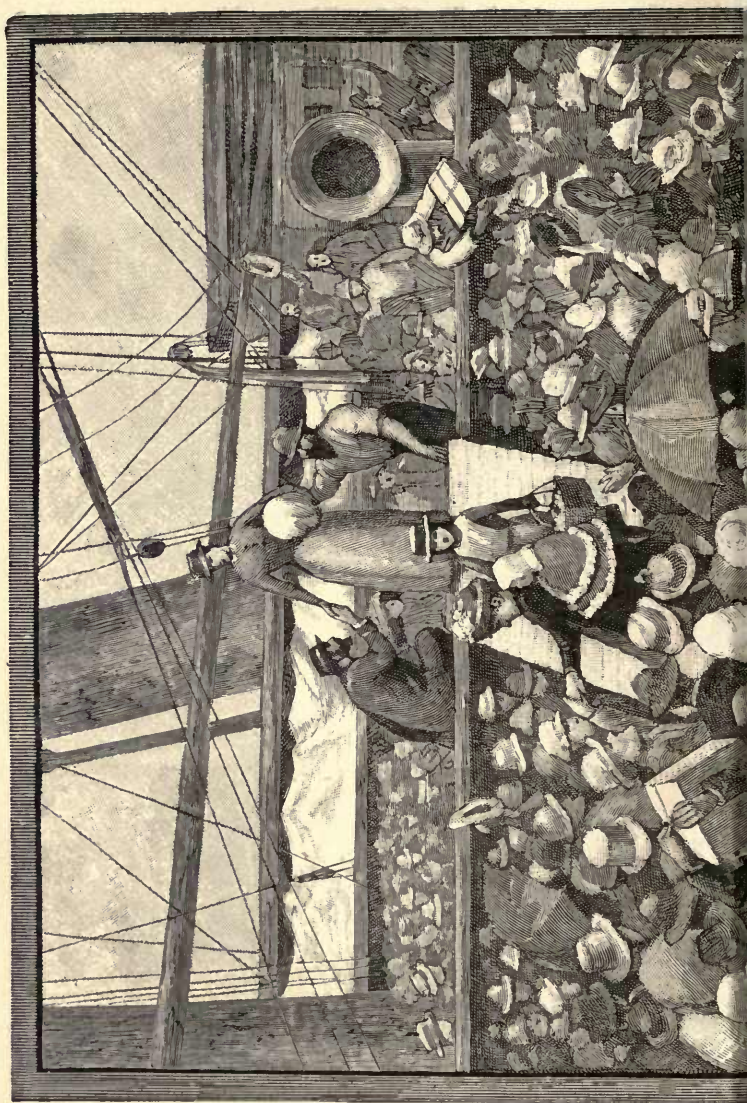
After dinner, when we came on deck again, I heard some one cry out, "Are there any carpenters on board? Carpenters—any carpenters who want employment?"

“Yes!” I was one. Five more came forward. One of the Queenslanders said he wished to engage one or two carpenters. Of course some one acted as interpreter. Well, he would give thirty pounds sterling per annum to a good man. He would also give him his board and lodging. We all thought it a fair offer, although scarcely up to our expectations. But then, again, what were our expectations? Half the time we were afraid we should get nothing at all to do, and the other half we thought we were to pick up bucketsful of gold. Anyhow, we were all anxious to engage, and I, with a full regard to the fact that my only property was a partnership in two hundred and odd empty bottles, was not at all sorry to see that I seemed to find favour in his eyes. I was offered an engagement on the above-named terms. Would I kindly step this way to sign the agreement? A document written in English was placed before me for signature. I could pretty well understand the meaning of it, and an interpreter was there ready enough to explain matters, but there were certain very important features in it which never were explained to me, and which I myself totally overlooked, and if I had seen these I should only have agreed to them as a last resource from starvation. As the agreement was just like those signed by thousands every year all over Queensland to this present day, I will give it here. It ran thus: — promised to serve — for the term of twelve calendar months and to obey all his lawful commands. In return for which, — would pay the

sum of £—— sterling and rations. Then followed the signatures. I understood that the word “rations” meant my board and lodging, and so it proved in my case, and as it was explained to me; but most of my unfortunate shipmates who signed similar agreements in the same good faith as I found out in a practical manner that to them it had another meaning. It will be noticed that the agreement says nothing whatever about lodging. Legally, a Queensland employer who engages a man for wages and “rations” might let his employé camp under the gum-trees without giving him any sleeping accommodation whatever, and that is very often done. If a man gets a shed or a corner of a stable to live in, it is more than he is entitled to under these agreements. So far as the food is concerned, the word “ration” as used in these agreements means a fixed quantity of certain things, which, therefore, again is all an employé can expect from his master. These consist of twelve pounds of raw beef or mutton, eight pounds of flour, two pounds of sugar and a quarter of a pound of tea. As long as these eatables are tea and sugar, flour and beef, nothing is said as to quality, and the most inferior goods which are in the market are called *ration-tea* and *ration-sugar*. But what is an unfortunate new arrival, who never made a cup of tea in his life before, to do, when on his arrival at some out-of-the-way place in the bush his “boss,” as the employer in Queensland is called, hands him these rations instead of giving him three square meals a day?



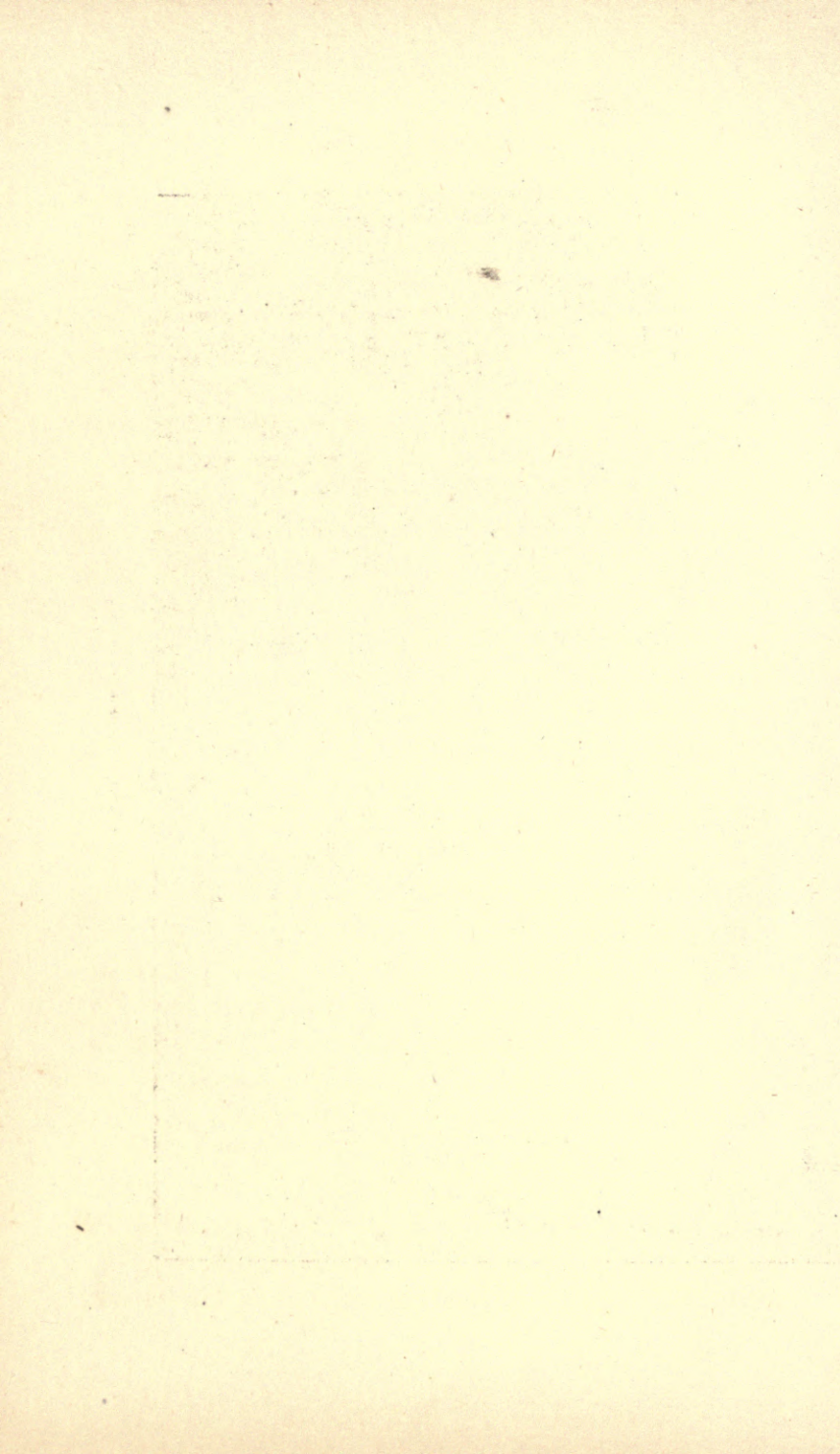






THE LANDING OF EMIGRANTS.





But what was happening now? The constables were running about among the people telling them to stand here and to stand there. All the single girls were packed together up by the wheel as close as they could stand. Then the married men with their families were told to stand as near them as they could, and the single men were again packed as close to them as possible. All of us were now on the quarter-deck. Then came the Queenslanders, the doctor, the captain, and the first mate, and took up a position in front of us down on the deck. One of our own constables with a very sanctimonious face was also there. What did it mean? The Immigration Agent read out of a large protocol, "Anna Frederica Johnston, come forward." "Anna Frederica Johnston, Anna—Anna, Anna Frederica Johnston. They want you—you are wanted; you have to go." The unfortunate girl was half paralyzed with terror, as she came forward. She was a Norwegian. The immigration agent asked her, "Had she been well and kindly treated on the voyage, and was she satisfied?" This had to be translated from German into Norwegian before she understood it. But scarcely did she understand what they said before she cried, "Oh yes, oh yes, I am thankful and satisfied." "Good," she might pass forward. Then another was called who also testified to her kind treatment, and so on until all the girls, even the one who had been tied to the mast, had said they were satisfied and had been well treated. While this was going on, some of the men who stood



nearest to me told me to erase their names from the written complaint which I carried. Others advised me that it was now too late altogether to complain; others again said, "Now is the time." I felt myself surprised beyond measure that the Queensland Government should take the trouble to cause such a question to be put to each individual immigrant, and I felt certain that it could not have been Queensland's fault if we had been badly treated. Anyhow, I saw no reason to tell any falsehoods, and my mind was soon made up how to act. As soon as the last girl had declared herself satisfied, the question began with the single men. The first who happened to be called was rather a dense sort of a fellow, and although he had signed the complaint, still he said he was "well satisfied." So then I thought the time had arrived for me to act. I went forward and presented my document written in Danish and addressed to the Danish Consul, Australia; it was translated from Danish to German and from German to English. Meanwhile I glared at the doctor and the doctor glared at me. I felt in rare good humour, the observed of all observers. As a Queenslander would say on such an occasion, it was the proudest moment in my life. I was asked to stand alongside the doctor and captain, and watch my case. The fellow who had already declared himself satisfied was called back and asked had he signed the complaint, and only passed forward after admitting that he had. Then the question to the remainder became, "Have you signed the complaint?"—to

which each of them, evidently pleased, replied in the affirmative. Those who had not signed, on saying "no" were then asked "did they wish to sign?" Every one of them signed it then right before the eyes of the doctor. I would as soon that they had not, because it was easily seen that they signed it more because they were asked to do so and did not want to cause trouble, than because they had changed their minds since they had been requested to do the same thing on the voyage. From that time to now I never heard any more about the complaint. Very likely it was forwarded to the proper authorities, and they perhaps took notice of it although unknown to us. The ship was clean when we landed, so were the emigrants, and we had all a healthy, well-fed appearance I am sure, and that must have been greatly in the doctor's favour. But let me say here at once, that if there had been one amongst us who had known the proper way to punish whoever was responsible for our ill-treatment, I believe it would have been a simple matter to have ruined the owners of the ship. If instead of writing our complaint to the Danish Consul, one of us had been able to issue a writ against the doctor upon some definite matter, he could have had as many witnesses as he chose, ready to hand, to prove what the fare of the ship had been. He might have produced his rag of a blanket in court too, and then have claimed damages. I am certain that no Queensland judge or jury would have said, after seeing it, that such a rag, two feet six inches

by three feet, was a sufficient covering on a four months' sea voyage, or that the food we received was either sufficient or that it in any way tallied with what we were promised. Such damages as would then have been awarded to the first plaintiff, could indisputably have been claimed by any other emigrant, and that would have meant more than the ship and all that was in it was worth.

My boss told me before the Queenslanders left the ship again that I might, as soon as we landed, come to his house for my food and lodging, and that he would not expect me to go to work for a few days, so that I was well provided for already. Three or four dozen other immigrants had also been engaged by the other Queenslanders, all for thirty pounds a year and rations, on exactly the same agreements as mine. But Thorkill was not among them, and I felt a little ashamed and sorry that it was so, as we had agreed not to part, and I had in this way taken my first chance regardless of him ; but he was earnest in his congratulations and certain, he said, he would be right too, somehow. We had all these empty bottles, and we expected nothing less than sixpence, or perhaps a shilling, apiece for them. At least I felt greatly consoled to think of them, and I made up my mind that he should have the whole return from them if he needed it. The next day arrived, when we should go ashore, and, full of excitement and expectations, we sailed up to the jetty. Slow work that ; it took us some hours to do it. Every one was hanging



over the side of the ship looking to see what the place was like, and watching a number of people who stood there. Now we were alongside, so close that we might have jumped ashore, but still we were forbidden to leave the ship before the doctor, who was ashore, arrived. A man stood on the jetty with a large basketful of bananas, which he offered for sale at sixpence per dozen, and handed them over the side of the ship to any one who would buy. He sold them readily, and my mouth watered to taste them; but I had no money. Thorkill stood alongside me, so he said, "I should like so to taste some of those bananas."

"So should I."

"He charges sixpence per dozen."

"Yes."

"I wonder if he would take a bottle for a dozen?"

"We will try."

I dived into the cabin as fast as I could for a bottle, because the man had only a few bananas left. We had all the bottles, or most of them, wrapped up in paper, and I took one which looked nice and clean, and came out again just in time to secure his attention. Now I had to try to make myself understood. "I give you bottle," said I, "if you give me bananas."

"Are you going to shout?" cried he. "What have you got?"

I did not know what that meant, but as he had a pleased sort of appearance, I nodded and smiled,

and caressed the bottle, saying, "Very good, very good bottle."

"All right," said he, "let us see what you have got. I give you some bananas; here you are, hand down your bottle."

So I took the bananas with the one hand, and handed him the bottle with the other.

He took it, smelt it, shook it, pulled off the wrapper, held it up towards the sun, and cried, "Dead mariner, by Jove."

Then every one on the jetty laughed like fun, but I was totally ignorant where the joke came in, and asked, "Is it not a very good bottle?"

"Oh, yes," said he, "splendid bottle," and they all kept on laughing and talking at me, assuring me that I would do well in Queensland! I understood that much.

Thorkill and I now retired into the cabin to eat the bananas, and while we ate them we had some conversation.

"I wonder what they all were laughing at?"

"Who shall say? Is—it—not—a—nuisance—that—we—do—not—understand—English—better? I—cannot—talk—to—them—at—all. You—seemed—to—do—fine—though. My—word—you—did. I—never—would—have—believed—it. I—will—study—that—language."

"Did you notice that he said, 'Dead mariner,' when he held the bottle up towards the sun?"

"Yes; now I should translate that as a dead sailor. I wonder what he meant?"

“Perhaps it is a slang name for a bottle.”

“I do not think you will find that a correct explanation. It was a dark bottle; now, I am inclined to think that that sort of bottle may be used for some liquor peculiar to this country called ‘Dead Mariner;’ the same as in Denmark you have so many different names for nearly the same thing. In that way you might be right in saying it is a slang name; but anyhow, we will find out the true meaning of it some day.”

“Yes,” I replied to Thorkill, “and the sooner we find it out the better. Don’t you see, the bottles may have a different value, and I should like to have full value for them. We are now in Queensland, Thorkill, and I do not intend to let any one fool me. So, before we sell to any one, I will find out exactly what they are worth. They did not not laugh at nothing down there on the jetty. I am afraid he had too good a bargain.”

“They seemed to say we would do well with the bottles,” remarked Thorkill.

“I hope we shall. But see! They are at last going ashore. Now, if you take my advice, one of us will stay on board for another hour or two watching the bottles, while the other goes up to the town to find out their true value, and a customer for them.”

Thorkill replied to this: “Ah, yes; you go up to the town. I will stay and watch the bottles. I am sure you can sell them to far better advantage than I.”

Meanwhile, a number of the immigrants had gone ashore, and Thorkill and I were getting the bottles out of their hiding-places and putting them on the table. Some Queenslanders came in. They looked on a little. I said, "How much money you pay me for one bottle?"

"Have you got all these bottles for sale?" inquired one.

"Of course," said I.

He did not answer, but went outside and called out "Mick."

In came the man who had sold me the bananas.

"Do you want to buy any more 'dead mariner'?" asked the first.

"Has he got all these bottles for sale?" inquired the banana man.

"Certainly," cried I. (Of course, I did not make myself quite so easily understood as might appear from this conversation, but still I managed both to understand and to make myself understood on this occasion.)

"No," cried he; "he did not think he wanted any more just now."

"How much money you think I receive for one bottle?" inquired I.

"Oh, plenty money," cried he, "my word ready; market, any one buys them."

"What do they say?" asked Thorkill of me.

"They say the bottles are worth a lot of money."



“See if you can find out what ‘dead mariner’ is.”

I took a porter bottle up, and then said, “You name that one ‘dead mariner’?”

Queenslander: “Yes, certainly; that is one ‘dead mariner.’”

I took up a clear bottle and inquired, “This clear thing, you call that empty bottle?”

Queenslander: “To be sure that is an empty bottle. But if you are willing to sell, you take them all up to that large hotel you see there. They give you half-a-crown apiece for them.”

I then asked, “Which one is most costly, ‘dead mariner’ bottle or clear bottle?”

Queenslander: “Oh, that fellow—‘dead mariner’—very dear; three shillings, I think.”

“Heavens! here, we have made our fortune already, Thorkill,” cried I. “Three shillings apiece for these bottles and two-and-sixpence for those. And it appears any one will buy. Are we not lucky?”

“Oh, but,” said Thorkill, “I shall never feel justified in taking half of all that money. It was your idea. I should never have thought of it. I shall be very thankful to receive just a pound or two.”

“Oh, no,” cried I, “you shall share half with me whatever I get. But, excuse me for saying it, you are so unpractical. Why are we not up and stirring? Why are we sitting here yet? Remember time is money in this country.” Then I ven-

tured to ask the Queenslanders if in the town there was any one whom I might ask to assist us in carrying the bottles ashore.

“Oh, yes,” they all cried, as if with one mouth. “You go up in town and get hold of a couple of black fellows, and then you take them all up that street you see there. Any one will buy them there.”

Thorkill remained on board keeping watch over the bottles, while I went ashore to see what I should see.

Just as I came to the end of the long jetty I saw standing there an aboriginal and three Gins. They were about as ugly a set of blacks as I have ever since seen in Queensland, and I was quite horrified at their appearance. The man had on a pair of white breeches, but nothing else. The Gins were also so scantily dressed that I am afraid of going into details of their wearing apparel. All of them had dirty old clay pipes in their mouths, which they were sucking, but there was no tobacco in them. The gentleman of the party saved me the trouble of accosting him, as he came towards me and inquired my name. Then he informed me that his name was Jack. He next introduced me to the ladies, who, it appeared, all had the same name—Mary. Of course I fell in with the humour of this arrangement at once. It seemed to me a delightfully free and easy way of making acquaintance. They all spoke a lot to me, which I did not in the least understand, and I did the same to them no

doubt. They asked me for tobacco, which I had not got; but it appeared that all was grist that came to their mill, for they asked in succession for matches, pipe, "sixpence," and I do not know what else, and even wanted to feel my pockets! Of course I did not like this familiarity, so I began to explain to them that I wanted them to work—to carry burdens from the ship. That was soon made clear to them. Then the "gentleman" of the party was very particular to know what I would pay him. I had thought to get them to carry the bottles up, and, having sold them, to pay them out of the proceeds; but as he seemed anxious to make a fixed bargain, I said, "I give you one bottle." In case he should have refused that, I intended to have gone on further, and to have offered a "dead mariner," but to my joy he accepted the offer with evident satisfaction, which again more thoroughly convinced me of the value of my bottles. I and the black fellow with his three Gins accordingly went back to the ship, where Thorkill sat keeping watch over our treasure.

I loaded the four blacks with four bags, in each of which were two dozen assorted bottles, and now we started for town in earnest. I thought it beneath my dignity to carry any bottles myself. I had exhorted so many of the immigrants that it was our duty to one another to try to make a good impression when we first landed, that the least I could do I thought would be to set a good example

Therefore I was faultlessly got up, in my own opinion, or at least as well as the circumstances of my wardrobe would permit. Still, my attire was not very suitable to this country, and indeed, when I think of it now, I must have cut a strange figure. I had on my black evening-dress suit, which so far would have been good enough to have gone to a ball in, but my white shirt, I know, was of a very doubtful colour, for I had been my own washer-woman, and it was neither starched nor ironed. Then my tall black hat, of which I was so proud when I got it, had suffered great damage on the voyage, and brush it as I would, any one might easily have seen that it had been used as a foot-stool. My big overcoat, I, according to the most approved fashion in Copenhagen, carried over my arm. In one hand I had my handkerchief, with which I had to constantly wipe the perspiration off my face, because it was very hot. Still, I felt myself a tip-top dignitary as I stalked along in front of the four blacks, who came, chattering their strange lingo, behind me.

We marched up to the main street, and I saw at once a hotel, that pointed out to me from the ship as the place in which to sell my bottles. In the bar were two or three gentlemen, of whom I took no notice. Behind the bar stood the barmaid, whom I profoundly saluted, also in Copenhagen fashion. I had what to say on the tip of my tongue, and indeed I have never forgotten it since. So I spoke to the barmaid thus: "I have bottles



I will sell to you. Will you buy? Three shillings every one." She looked bewildered, not at me but at the gentlemen in the bar, as if she appealed to them for assistance, and they began to talk to me, but I did not understand them at all. I could feel myself getting red in the face, too, but I manfully made another effort. I called in the blacks and ordered them to deposit their load inside the door. Then I said with great exactness, "I—do—not—ferstan—thee—thou—ferstan—me. I—sell—this—clear—bottles—to thee—for three shillings every one. This—dead—mariner—I—sell—three—shillings—and sixpence every one. Will thou buy?" Meanwhile I had taken out of the bags two samples, a clear and a dark bottle, and placed them on the counter, and I now looked inquiringly around me.

Oh, the mortification which became my portion! The girl seemed to faint behind the bar, and the gentlemen made not the slightest excuse for laughing right out in my face. What they said I do not know, but it was clear they did not want my bottles. I felt insulted, and I determined to pay the blacks off and to leave the bottles here until I could find a German Queenslander to whom I might explain my business, and who might help me to sell them. So I took the clear bottle which stood on the counter, and handed it to the black as payment for his service. He looked viciously at me and said, "That fellow no good bottle."

I said, "Very dear bottle that." Then I decided

to satisfy him at any cost, and gave him the other one, too, and said, "Very dear bottle this, dead mariner."

Now began a scene as good as a play. The blacks appealed to the gentlemen, and the gentlemen howled with laughter, and I wished myself a thousand miles away. What did they laugh at? Why did these scampish blacks not feel satisfied after having received double payment? What did it all mean? More people came in and seemed amused and happy, but I was not in the swim. Something was wrong. But what was it? I began to suspect that my bottles could not be so very valuable, as the blacks had thrown both the bottles out into the gutter. Anyhow, for me to stand here to be made a fool of would not do, so I went out of the bar and down the street. But to get away was no easy matter. In fact I found it impossible. The coloured gentleman with his three ladies were in front of me, behind me, and on both sides, crying, howling, yelling, cursing, and appealing to every one who passed, or to those who came to their doors, "That fellow big rogue. That fellow no b—— good. He b—— new chum. He say he give me bottle, he give me no good b—— bottle; dead mariner no b—— good." This was more than human nature could stand. I threw my overcoat and bell-topper into the gutter, and went for the black fellow straight. I got on the top of him in a minute, but the battle was not nearly won by that, because the black ladies were

tearing at my coat-tails, which just formed two fine handles for them. They split my coat right up to the shoulders, pulled my hair, and belaboured me in a general way. Now came a policeman and grabbed me by the neck. All the "ladies" ran for their lives out of sight, but I suspect their spouse was too bruised to follow their example. Anyhow, he stuck to his guns yet, and while the policeman tried to march us both down the street, he kept appealing to him, declaring his innocence, and my villainy. That I should have spent the next few days in the watch-house I am sure enough, had not an elderly man stepped out of the crowd of onlookers and spoken to the policeman. Then he addressed me in German. I learned then, through much merriment on his part and heartburning on my own, that empty bottles are in Queensland just so much rubbish. Indeed, after the policeman let me go, he took me round to the backyard of the hotel, and there I saw bottles lying by the thousands, some broken and others sound, ready to cart away. But how was I to have known that? Was it easy to guess that a bottle, which might pass for twopence English money in Copenhagen nearly as readily as cash, would here in Queensland have absolutely no value? It is like all other things one knows, easily explained: here there being no distilleries or breweries for making liquors of any kind, they are all imported, hence empty bottles become a drug in the market.

But I was not out of trouble yet. The German

who had in so timely a manner come to my rescue, seeing the state of mind I was in, tried to console me by offering me a glass of spirits. I accepted his offer very readily, I admit, and coming into the bar again, which so vividly reminded me of my former shame and all the indignities heaped upon me, I poured out a whole tumblerful of raw brandy—which I should not have done, considering that I came from a ship on which nothing of that sort was served out. But I will draw a veil over the rest of this miserable day. Not but that the worst is told. Intemperance was never my weakness, but I will leave the reader to fill out the picture, and to think of me as I returned to the ship, bleeding, torn, and battered, and there I had to face poor Thorkill, who, in his mild surprise and disapproval, was to me more terrible than if he had stormed and raged ever so much.



*CHAPTER IV.*

*GAINING COLONIAL EXPERIENCE.*



## CHAPTER IV.

### GAINING COLONIAL EXPERIENCE.

HAVING returned to the ship after the incidents related in the last chapter, and having somewhat soothed my agitated feelings, and changed my apparel, Thorkill and I were under the necessity again of returning on shore; which we did, and had no difficulty in finding the depôt or place prepared for the reception of the immigrants. I had yet scarcely noticed anything on land, but we saw now at a glance that the town was very small, or perhaps it would be more correct to say that the town was large but thinly inhabited. In Queensland we generally estimate the size of a place by the number of public-houses which it contains, and in Bowen there were three of these institutions. Grass was growing luxuriantly enough in the main street, and altogether it did not, as we came along, strike us that people here seemed remarkably busy. But when we came down to the depôt, the scene was changed.

The depôt was a large building, or series of buildings, without particularly good accommo-

dation, but it had the advantage that there was plenty of room for everybody. I felt quite glad to again see the familiar faces of the other immigrants, although we had only been separated a few hours. There was a large kitchen attached to the place, and a vast quantity of bread and beef and potatoes had been left there, more than could possibly be eaten by those present. Two or three butchers among the immigrants, too, were quite in their element here, cutting up the bullocks, and all the girls seemed to have formed themselves into a committee in order to dress the meat in various appetizing ways. But what seemed the most encouraging feature of all was to see thirty or forty saddle-horses "hung up" outside the fence and their owners walking about among the men offering them engagements. The girls were also in great request. A number of English ladies stood about the yard, or went in and out of the kitchen. They all seemed to want the girls who were doing the cooking, and what between the English ladies who kept trying to attract their attention, their own sweethearts—who had now the first opportunity since they left Hamburg to speak to them—and the preparation of food for six hundred and odd people, they certainly had enough to do. It was comical to watch them. Among the men the scene was but one degree less animated. They might, I am sure, all have been engaged that first day if they had liked. A number were engaged, and over and over again



were offers made to them of further engagements, until at last they turned their backs to the Englishmen who seemed almost to implore some of them to sign agreements. They were all offered the same terms—thirty pounds for twelve months, and rations. The girls got only twenty or twenty-five pounds a year, but there seemed to be very little difference between the agreements. The Queenslanders would go for the biggest and most able looking of the men first, and when they had secured them, engage the others with the same terms. I saw my “boss” down there, and went home with him for supper. I was received with the greatest kindness by his family, and he himself could not have looked more friendly if I had been a long-lost relation. He proved to be a contractor, and had also a carpenter’s shop and showroom attached to his place. He took me into the shop and showed me several things, and asked me could I make this or that? There was nothing in the shop that a boy who had served two years of his life in Copenhagen could not make, but when I said “yes,” he seemed greatly pleased with me, and patted me on the back. We could not understand each other very much. After tea, I was shown into a neat room, where stood a nice bed, a chest of drawers, table, chair, &c. This was to be my abode.

My “boss,” however, returned at once and gave me to understand that he wished me to go with him up to town, and have a general look round.

He gave me first of all a pound sterling, which had the effect of greatly raising my spirits. Then he took me from the one public-house to the other, and that made me still more hilarious, especially as he would not allow me to change my pound; and at last he took me to a store, where a German presided behind the counter over a lot of ready-made clothes. Through the German as interpreter, he told me that he would advise me to buy some new clothes after the Queensland pattern, and that he would advance sufficient of my wages to cover the cost. I bought then white trousers, a crimean shirt, a big slouch hat, and a red belt, and put all on at once. This is the orthodox Queensland costume in the bush, but in my own eyes I looked a regular masquerader, as I now swaggered down among the immigrants in my new transformation. I was quite a hero among them at once, being able to boast of my splendid appointment, and I believe I had to relate twenty times that evening what I had had for my supper at my master's place. I might, perhaps, tell it to the reader, because it seemed to me at that time most astonishing, although it really—with very little variation—is the ordinary food everybody eats all over the country, as soon as one comes away from the single man's hut in the bush.

In the morning we generally had fried steak, white bread, and butter. No beer or schnapps are ever put on the table in this country, but instead of that one drinks tea by the quart at every meal.

At dinner-time the ordinary menu will be some sort of roast meat and vegetables, with a pudding after. At supper one will get more meat and vegetables, and more bread and butter and tea. It is all very good, but there is a frightful sameness about it. I used at first to long for one of those plain yet delicious dishes which the Danish housewives make at home. But I do not believe English people would eat it, if it were put before them. They seem to think that anything which is not a solid junk of roast beef must be un-English. I have almost come to the same way of thinking myself. But that evening in the *depôt* we did not criticise the bill of fare. The immigrants all thought they were going to fare in the same sumptuous way. Poor fellows, they did not, as a rule.

Next day, Thorkill came to me with sparkling eyes, and told me he had been so fortunate. A gentleman from Port Mackay, a sugar planter, had engaged him and twenty-five others, all for thirty pounds a year, and they were to sail again for the plantation next day. He understood it was not far away. We might be able to see one another occasionally. He had told the planter that he had studied agriculture, and the planter had said he was a good fellow.

“These—Englishmen—are—so—kind,—I—am sure—he—is—a—nice—man. Perhaps he will make something of me by and by, when I can talk English.”

Poor Thorkill; I see him in a single man's hut on a plantation among twenty-five others, or with his hoe on his shoulder coming and going to the fields. He went away the next day, and I fully expected he would have written to me, but he did not. I did not know his address, and I did not hear of him again until three years after, when I met him on the diggings.

As many of the immigrants were going away—they did not themselves know where—in another day or two, it was suggested by some one that there should be a theatrical display at the dépôt in the evening; and the idea was taken up with enthusiasm by some of the leading spirits among us. It had, before I arrived that morning, been agreed that the play should be a French pantomime. For the information of any one who might never have seen anything of the kind, let me say that it was a one act farce, in which the persons act by pantomime alone. Cassander is an old man; his daughter Columbine loves Harlequin, a young man who always dances about Columbine when Cassander does not see them. Then there was Pierrot, the foolish but funny man-of-all-work, who is set to catch Harlequin, but is always "bested"; and the staid old lover whom Cassander wishes Columbine to marry. Not much rehearsal was needed to play the piece, and the dresses were also easily made up on short notice. It had further been decided in my absence that I was to play Harlequin, but I objected very much.



At last I was forced into it in a manner, because I was a pretty fair dancer at that time, and they had nobody else. What consoled me greatly was, that I was to wear a black mask, so that I knew that if my feelings should get the better of me while on the stage, that I might make as many faces behind the mask as I liked. The whole town was to be invited, and we gave five shillings to the bell-crier to announce through the streets that some renowned artists had arrived at the *depôt*, and were going to give a grand performance that night at seven o'clock.

We worked away hard that day in rehearsals, fitting of dresses, stage making, quarrelling, and in a few other things which are indispensable on such occasions. In the evening the whole building was crammed full of English people; there were even some ladies. Our own people had all back seats. Everything went well. Our orchestra consisted of three violinists. There were scores of musicians among us, but these were the best, and were used to play together. Then the blanket which served for a curtain went up, and we began to act our parts. Everything went well excepting that *Pierrot*, whose face was chalked over, began to perspire very much, and the chalk came off; but that was nothing. It was reserved for me to spoil the whole proceeding. It came about this way: the fellow who played *Columbine* was a big, flabby-looking chap, and he looked very nasty indeed in women's clothes. As it was my part to dance

about Columbine and make love to him—or her—as you please, I had also to snatch kisses from him about a dozen times during the evening, but of course I understood he knew sufficient of acting not to inflict the punishment of real kissing on *me*. The first time, however, when my turn came, he turned his face full upon me, and the osculation could be heard all over the room. This happened two or three times, and every time people laughed and applauded; but it made me regularly wild. So as he tried it again I tore the mask off my face before I had time to think, and cried: “Look here, if you do that again I won’t play.” That brought the house down with great applause and homeric laughter; but I got so upset over it that it was impossible for me to go on the stage again, and the play came to an abrupt end.

The only one of all the immigrants that remained at the depôt after a fortnight was over, was a sickly little individual whom everybody on board had been in the habit of pitying or jeering at, as the case may be, and who now seemed quite unable to obtain employment. He was then sent up to Townsville, to try there, and as I happen to know what became of him, and as his short career affords a striking instance of what perseverance will do for a man in Queensland, I will state how he fared. It appears that he at last obtained employment in the —— Hotel in Ravenswood, to help the girls in the kitchen at cleaning knives, plucking fowls, and the like. He had to sign an

agreement whereby he bound himself to remain for three years. The wages for the first year were ten pounds, for the second fifteen, and for the third twenty pounds. These are the smallest wages I have ever heard of in this country for a white man, but our friend thought nothing of that, and stuck to his work. He could cut hair and shave; I think he had been in a barber's shop at home. When he brought the guest's shaving-water in the morning, he would always offer his tonsorial services at the same time. Of course he would be paid. When he was paid, he would generally say, "You have not got a few old clothes you do not want?" Then most people, as he looked so poor and insignificant, would either give him a lot of clothes, or some money to buy with; and it was pretty well known in that town where one might buy second-hand clothing for cash. If a guest went away from the hotel, he would always be there hat in hand, holding the horse. If one said to him, "Will you come and have a drink?" he would answer, "No, thank you, sir; please, I would rather have the money." In that way, while everybody called him "poor fellow," he was scooping in sixpences, shillings, and even half-crowns every day. As he gave satisfaction to his master, he was promised, as a make-up for his small wages, that if he stayed the three years out, he should have as a present permission to build a barber's shop alongside the hotel, and be charged no rent. He did stay the three years out, and although I was in

his confidence as little as anybody else, I am very sure he had then his three years' wages in his pocket and a good deal more besides. Then he had built a small shop alongside the hotel. It was very small, but it was in the proper place for doing business; and he began at once a roaring trade. Sixpence for a shave, a shilling for hair-cutting, and half a crown for shampooing! He had also ready-made clothes for sale, hop beer, ginger beer, fruit, saddlery, and much more. People who had anything for sale might go to him and be certain that he would offer them a cash price for whatever it was. He opened his shop at seven o'clock in the morning and shut it at twelve o'clock at night. On Sundays, indeed, he was supposed to shut for three or four hours; but one had only to knock at his door to bring him forward. Meanwhile, I do not believe his old master, or any one else, could have obtained credit from him for a sixpence. The usual thing in his shop was to see half a dozen men sitting in his back room waiting to be shaved or shampooed, and half a dozen standing by the counter in the front room, while he would jump like a cat among them trying to serve them all at once. But now I see I have made a mistake. I have written that "his short career affords a striking instance of what perseverance might do for a man in this country." That might be true if the story ended here, but it does not. He was a great miser. His principal food, as he himself assured me, was the rotten fruit in



the shop. When a banana or an apple became quite unsaleable, he would eat it. He had no assistant in the shop, and could, therefore, never possibly take any outdoor exercise. At last he fell sick, and the doctor told him he must go out on horseback every day, and have plenty of nourishing food. He never bought a horse, and he never altered his way of living. At last, when it was too late, he got somebody to stand in the shop for him, for he was then too weak to stand there himself; and he died in the back room a week after. But even the day before he died I saw him sitting in the shop trying to direct the assistant and keeping control over the money-box. I heard how much he had made, but I forget. Anyhow, it was thousands, and all made in a few years!

Now I will relate what happened to me the first Sunday I passed in Queensland, and to do that I must recall to the reader's memory another of my shipmates, the naval Lieutenant A. He had got married as soon as we came ashore, to the young lady who I always understood was his intended wife, and they had already rented a little house and made themselves very comfortable. On the Saturday, he came to me and told me that he had carried a letter of introduction from home to a gentleman who was one of the first civil servants in Bowen. This gentleman he had seen, and as an outcome of the interview, he had been invited to come with his wife to the Englishman's place on Sunday forenoon to be introduced to his family,

and that Mr. and Mrs. —, as well as A. and his wife, were all then to walk to a large garden which lay a mile or so outside the town. He promised himself great pleasure and much advantage from the acquaintance, and as a special favour to me, he said: "Now Mr. — said to me that I might invite one of our shipmates to come with us, and I shall invite you." I thanked him very much for the honour he did me.

"You understand," said he, "that I would like very much to make a good impression, not only for myself, but for our country too. I am not in the least afraid to invite *you*, still excuse me for reminding you that this man has much influence in Brisbane, and I have no doubt he could make it worth your while too to be on your best behaviour."

When he was gone, I began to look over my wardrobe, and found that I could yet make a brave show. Still, I had a great doubt in my mind whether it would not be the more correct thing to dress myself in my Queensland clothes—that is, the slouch hat and the moleskins. But as I did not seem to know myself in them at all, I decided that it was best to make the most of the clothes I had with me from home, although it was not without some misgivings that I came to this conclusion. My swallowtail coat had been torn, and although it was mended by a tailor, it was not good enough to wear again on such an occasion, but I had a nice new jacket I had bought in Hamburg, also a

beautifully got-up white shirt and white waistcoat. As to the belltopper, it was done for. No more should I go into society in that belltopper, and the Queensland hat seemed only fit company for the crimean shirt and the moleskins. I therefore went and borrowed a tall hat for the purpose from among the immigrants, and as I came back with it, I bought a pair of gloves for half a guinea in a shop.

The next forenoon, punctually at eleven o'clock, was outside of A.'s house in all my glory. A. and his wife were gone, however, and I then bent my steps towards the house to which I had been directed. As soon as I came near, I saw A. standing outside the house talking to a gentleman, whom I at once understood to be the man who had invited us. He looked a gentleman all over. Yet the same indescribable sort of swagger which I had noticed in everybody else I had yet met in the country seemed also to hover about him. I might here observe that this swagger is not exactly native to this colony. It is only put on for the benefit of new arrivals. As I came up A.'s friend stood with his feet wide apart, and was in the act of lighting a meerschaum pipe. A massive gold chain hung across his well-nourished stomach. I could see that if I had not dressed myself to my best ability, I should have made a grave mistake. Although I had scarcely lifted my eyes to him yet, I noticed these details as A. introduced me to him, while I saluted him as we always salute one another in

Copenhagen. Perhaps I was just a little more than usually polite. My hat was at my knee as A. said, "Mr. —, Mr. —." But the Englishman did not seem remarkable for his politeness. On the contrary, I felt very angry at his behaviour. He never changed his position in the slightest degree; he seemed only to give a sort of self-satisfied grunt, "How de do, how de do."

There is no mistake about it, I began to wish I had not come. It was not as though I had not been polite enough; I felt certain both that I could make a bow with anybody, and that I had saluted and been saluted by greater dignitaries before than he. Why then should he slight me? thought I. Was it the custom in this country to invite people on purpose to insult them? They began to speak to me, and I understood that the ladies who were to take part in the excursion were inside finishing their toilet, and would be out directly. A. could see, no doubt, that I was not pleased, and of course he could also guess the reason. He had been in England too, and was well versed in English customs, so he said to me, "It is foolish of you to feel offended because Mr. — did not take his hat off to you. Indeed, it was you who looked ridiculous. I am sure you never yet saw any one take off his hat to another in this country. It is not an English custom. Indeed it is specially distasteful to English people. So do not do it again. Of course it did not matter."



When I heard that I was in humour again. I could forgive every one so long as they did not offer me a wilful insult. But was it not strange, thought I? And there he stood, as easy as could be, smoking his pipe in the street. Well, there is nothing like it, after all. What is a man without his pipe? I had mine in my pocket, but I had never dreamed of taking it out till now. I did not know what to make of things, but I thought that if such training as I had received was at fault, perhaps it would be well to imitate those whose training was correct. So I took my pipe out of my pocket and borrowed a match from Mr. — to light it with. Mine was only a clay pipe, and I could scarcely help laughing to myself meanwhile, because it seemed to me very strange. But I was determined now to show I knew English manners, and so I puffed away. Just now Mr. —'s wife came out of the glass doors on the verandah. She had also dressed to make a good impression, because she was rustling with silk and satin, and shining with gold brooches and chains all over. The doors were opened for her by a servant, and Mrs. A. was also there. As Mrs. A. told me afterwards, they had watched me through the glass doors while I was saluting the husband, and probably the Englishwoman was at that moment under the impression that I intended to go down on my knees before her. But if she thought that, all I can say is that she was mistaken. I was not going to look ridiculous this time. She made a

bow to me something of the sort, as I take it, that one of the Queen's maids of honour have to practise before her majesty—a most profound obeisance. But I stood brave. With my feet apart, in English fashion, I puffed away at my pipe, and nodded at her, saying, “How de do? How de do?”

At this juncture of affairs, I became aware that nobody seemed pleased. The lady drew herself up and seemed surprised. Her husband appeared to regard me with a lively interest. So did two women in a house opposite. A., in a sort of consternation, repeated the formula of introduction. I felt the blood surging to my face, and my courage fast forsaking me. Then it occurred to me that as I myself had not the least idea what the words “how de do” meant which I had employed in saluting her, that perhaps it was not a proper expression before a lady, and that it would have been better if I had said something of which I did understand the meaning. So as A. repeated the form of introduction, Mr. — and Mrs. —, I said with great desperation, “Good day, missis.”

Then I swallowed a whole mouthful of tobacco smoke (it is such strong tobacco one smokes here, and I had not been used to more than a cigar on rare occasions), and then—I must—expectorate. For the life of me I could not avoid it, but where to do it, whether in front of me or behind me, I did not know, and so I compromised and spat to the side. While all this occurred I felt as guilty

as any criminal condemned before a judge, and still where it came in I did not know, because had not A., on whose English experience I wholly relied, told me scarcely ten minutes before, that "to take the hat off to one another was not an English custom—that it was, indeed, specially distasteful to English people"? What then could I think? You may judge of my feelings when A., now shaking with rage and entirely forgetting himself, exclaimed to me in Danish, "You are an unmannerly dog. Has no one ever taught you yet to take your hat off to a lady? There he stands, smoking a stinking pipe right in her face."

Oh, yes! oh, yes, indeed, my humiliation was at its highest point. Quarrelling in our own language, and ready almost to fight! Mrs. — disappeared indoors again. Mrs. A. dared not follow her, but walked down the street a little, not knowing where to put herself, and Mr. — becoming more and more boisterous with me for an explanation. It did not last long, but long enough—quite. Then I went and sat, regardless of all appearance, on the verandah, while A., with much humility, tried to explain the matter to our host. Mr. — did not quite seem to relish the joke. He came up to me and informed me with much gravity that A. had explained the matter to his satisfaction. "But," said he, "you will certainly find that in this country it is the custom to salute a lady with a great deal more politeness

than you used just now towards my wife. It is a lesson, I assure you, sir, you cannot learn too quickly."

Half of this I understood and half I guessed. He did not know, however, that his own mode of salutation would in Copenhagen have been thought just about as bearish as what he was now correcting me for. I rose to bid him good-bye, because I was determined to go home as the right course now to pursue; but as I took off my hat to him again my crestfallen appearance seemed to amuse him, because he began to laugh, and when I had reached the corner of the house he came after me, insisting that I should come back. I declined, until I could see that by remaining stubborn I should only give still greater offence, and so we returned and went into the drawing-room to have a glass of wine. Mrs. — came now into the room, and with well-bred kindness tried to put me at my ease again. But although they now seemed to have forgiven me, and were preparing to start for their walk, I felt that I could not go with them, and after asking A. in my presence to offer my apology to the lady herself, I took up my hat, and, bowing profusely to all, went away.

The reader may guess that I was not very proud of myself when I came home and flung myself on my bed. My career in Queensland had indeed opened in a very unpropitious manner. I had not been a week in the country yet, and it appeared I



had made myself look more foolish wherever I had been than I had thought it possible to do. First the bottles—what disgrace was not that, fighting with the blacks in the street scarcely an hour after coming ashore; and poor Thorkill, who had invested his last sixpence, on my recommendation, in buying empty bottles! Then at the depôt the evening after, when I somehow again had been the laughing-stock of them all—a regular “Handy Andy”; and now to-day, when I had started out with the best intentions, and had only succeeded in making a never-to-be-forgotten picture of myself—and that after having borrowed a “bell-topper” to look grand in! Now I had to return that piece of furniture to the owner, and when he asked me how I had enjoyed the company of my grand acquaintances, probably I should have to tell a falsehood about it in order to hide my shame. One consolation was that I had yet the gloves—they were my own to do with as I liked. I had paid ten and sixpence for them, more than half my fortune. Faugh! was ever any one like me? Was that all I had come to Queensland for? But at all events this should not happen again. If I could find an ass bigger than myself, thought I, I should be satisfied, but never again as long as I lived would I seek the acquaintance of people who by any stretch of imagination might think themselves my superiors.

Then I called in from the backyard a whole troupe of dirty, lazy blacks, who were lying there

basking in the sun in an almost naked condition, and made them understand that I would give them all my home clothes if they would perform a war dance in them for my instruction and pleasure. One of them put on my swallow-tail coat and bell-topper (he had no breeches), another got my overcoat, one of the ladies put on my jacket (she had nothing else), another put on my woollen comforter, not round her neck but round her waist, where it was of more use. At last I took my flute, and the whole troupe kept screaming and dancing about in the backyard while I played, until my "boss" came and interrupted the proceedings. I felt a grim sort of satisfaction. Alas! there is no saying what is to become of any of us before the end is over. Clothes are lifeless things, yet how often had I not brushed them and thought it important that they should look well! I really felt a kind of remorse when I saw these filthy blacks lie wallowing in them amid a flock of yelping curs.

And now I fell to work at my trade in earnest. The houses in Bowen are all built of wood, and a very easy affair it is for any one to build them. Indeed housebuilding in the small Queensland towns can scarcely be called a trade, insomuch that any practical man who can use carpenter's tools could easily build his own house. A hammer and a coarse saw was about a complete set of tools on many jobs we did up there. Still, large wooden houses filled with all the most modern comforts

are also constructed, and in such none but the best workmanship is tolerated, so there, of course, a tradesman is indispensable. At all housebuilding, too, a man who is constantly at it acquires a quickness which would altogether outdistance the novice, but one may learn as he goes in that trade, and the best men I have met in the carpenter trade out here are men who never served their time to it.

There were no saw-mills in the town, nor was there any suitable timber to saw in the bush, so that we depended for a supply on an occasional schooner, or on what the steamers sometimes would bring. At times we had no timber at all. Then we had to make furniture out of the packing-cases in the stores, or the "boss" would buy an old humpy and pull it down, and we had to try to make a new one out of it. My employer had engaged another carpenter besides myself from among the immigrants. This man had got married at the depôt to one of the girls, and they lived in a small house. He had thirty shillings a week, of which, of course, most went to keep house. But Bowen is one of the very few non-progressive towns on the coast, and houses stood empty in all directions, so that he only had to pay a nominal rent. Our "boss" seemed to have plenty of work always, and, besides ourselves, there were two and sometimes three English carpenters employed. We had to work like boys for them, because we could not very well be sent anywhere by ourselves,

as we could not speak to people about the work to be done. One thing I might mention here, and which I think very unfair, is this, that nobody took the trouble to speak English to us, but they seemed even to go out of their way to teach us a sort of pigeon English, which, of course, would demonstrate our inferiority to the individual who addressed us. Although I do not dislike either English, Scottish, or Irish people, I think it a great delusion of theirs that they are more hospitable to foreigners, or cosmopolitan in their way of thinking, than other nationalities, but that they are under the impression that they are the salt of the earth is certain. Meanwhile my mate and I did the best we could to vindicate the honour of our country. I felt myself daily getting stronger and more active; the change of air did wonders, and so was it with my mate. After a while, we found we could fully hold our own. The English tradesmen were very fond of showing how much they could do, but as we both began to get up to their standard they would, as we worked under them, knock us off what we were doing and put us to something else, often with the evident intention of making the "boss," when he came, think we had not done much, or did not understand our work. So one day I had a terrible quarrel with the man with whom I was working on that account, and then he began to denounce us all for cutting the wages down. I had no intention of cutting down his wages, and I did not know in the least what



wages he got, but when he told me that he received three pounds sterling every week I thought that the "boss" had treated me very badly. I learned then that three pounds are the ordinary weekly wages for carpenters in Queensland, and I told the English carpenter that I would immediately ask the "boss" for an increase in *my* wages to that amount, and that if he would not give it to me I would not do more work than I got paid for. I had been there six months at that time, and had never taken any money of my wages beyond what I received when I started, but when I asked for three pounds per week my employer was very dissatisfied. I wanted him to cancel the agreement. He refused, and I accused him of having taken an unfair advantage of me. He assured me that as he had got me he would keep me. "Very well," said I, "do your best to obtain your pound of flesh, but do not charge too high a day's wages when you send me away after this; I might not suit."

From that day there was war between us, war to the knife. Still I was, and had been, well treated there, and so far I had done my best to deserve it. When I think of it now, I am glad that before this occurred I had an opportunity to show my willingness. What my master's profit on me was I do not know, but it cannot have been large. What with my inability to speak the language, the learning how to handle the different tools used here, and one thing and another, it was

unreasonable for me to expect the full wages at once. When I compare my fate with that which befell some of the other immigrants, I ought to have thought myself very fortunate. Some of these were sent out in the bush around the town, and among those who were a few miles distant, I heard much dissatisfaction existed. I will here relate how some, at least, were treated. One man and his wife, and four single men, were engaged at a station fifty miles away. Their agreements were all the same, thirty pounds per annum and rations. The woman, however, was not engaged. When they arrived at the place they found a small house in the middle of the bush. When they asked where were their rooms or place to camp in, their employer told them they might camp anywhere they liked as long as they did not come inside *his* house. They had then got some bags and branches of trees put together and slept under them, but there was no protection from rain, and the poor woman, who was not well at the time, thought she was going to die. Instead of food, they were served, as I have before stated, with raw beef and flour. The reader may imagine what sort of doughboys they were making. This was strictly and correctly the truth, although these poor people certainly never knew the true intent of the agreement. They would not work, they said, unless they got proper food, but their employer was abusing them every day. They had to fell trees and split timber for fences. Of course such hard

work, with no cooked food to eat and no bed to sleep in, was an unreasonable thing to expect from them. After six or seven weeks of this one of them went away, empowered by the others to go to town and complain for the others. He came into town, where he told me what I now relate; but his "boss" was after him quickly, and instead of obtaining redress, he was put in the lock-up fourteen days for absconding from his hired service, and then compelled to go back again! While he was in the lock-up, my "boss" used to send him up three good meals every day. People who may read this at home will no doubt think that there must be great brutality somewhere for people to be treated like this. I agree with them. Yet the same treatment and fare comes light to an old hand. He knows what to expect, and is prepared for it. As men travel about from place to place in search of work, it is absolutely necessary for them to carry everything with them and to be their own cooks too. They have their tent, blanket, food, billy, sometimes a frying-pan, all bundled together with their clothes and strapped on their backs, or, if they are well-to-do, they have a horse to carry the "swag" for them, or even two horses, one being to ride on. There is really no reason why a man should not possess a couple of horses here, but still they as often do not. The billy serves all purposes: in it the meat is cooked, the tea is boiled, and on extra occasions the plumduff too.

It is only just to say that the custom of forcing

men to camp out in their own tents and to cook their own rations is growing more and more out of use. In most places in the bush the employer now provides at least shelter for his men: in many places they have the food cooked as well; yet there are to this day thousands of people in Queensland who live as I have just described, and who never see vegetables from one year's end to another.

The reader will, therefore, see that I was comparatively fortunate in this, that I had both shelter and food while I was learning the language and accustoming myself to the country. But after my request for more wages had been refused, I did as little work as possible, indeed I may say I did scarcely anything. I played quite the *gamin* with the old gentleman, until one day he offered to let me go, and then free once more I promised myself never again to sign away my liberty.



*CHAPTER V.*

*TOWNSVILLE: MORE COLONIAL  
EXPERIENCES.*



## CHAPTER V.

### TOWNSVILLE : MORE COLONIAL EXPERIENCES.

I HAD now paid out to me twelve pounds sterling as the balance of wages due, so it will be perceived that I had not been extravagant. Yet I am afraid that if I had been taking my wages up weekly I should not have had so much, if, indeed, anything. Yet here were the twelve pounds now, and that was the main thing. It made over a hundred Danish dollars, quite a large sum to me. Then I considered where I should go next. There were some gold mines inland within one or two hundred miles, but I did not know the road, or else I should have gone there. Just then there had been opened another port north of Port Denison, viz., Townsville. I understood that if a man wanted to make money, he should go there; or rather I understood the further north I went the more pay I should get, on account of its being hotter there, but that down south, where the climate was supposed to be better, carpenters were not in demand. So, "Northwards, ho!" was my cry. The steamer left Port Denison the next day for Townsville, and I was among the passengers. It is on leaving one of

these small ports on the Queensland coast that I have always more than at any other time been impressed with the utter loneliness in which they lie. One sees the few houses and appurtenances like a speck on the coast, and north and south the long vast coastline. We steamed along all the evening, night, and next morning, and towards noon my attention was directed to some small white specks on the beach. That was Townsville, the new settlement where money was to be made. The steamer I was in could not run close, but lay out in the bay until another very small steamer came out and took us all on board. Then in another half-hour we ran into a small creek, past three or four galvanized iron sheds, and here we were at the wharf in the middle of the main street of the town.

Townsville lies on the bank of a small river or creek called Ross Creek, which when I was there was remarkable for being stocked with alligators. One could not very well, therefore, cross the creek without some danger, and at that time all the people and all the houses without a single exception, lay on the south side of the creek. Ross Creek formed, I might say, one side of the main street. Facing it lay a number of small shanties, some made of packing cases and old tin; others again, built with a view to permanency, of nicely dressed sawn timber, and looking like rich relations in contrast to their poor neighbours. This was Flinders Street, or Townsville proper. For about ten chains this row



of houses ran, and facing it, on the other side of the creek, was one vast wilderness of swamp, long grass and trees. When one had passed the row of houses composing the street there were turns off to the bush in all directions, and tents, huts, or sheets of galvanized iron stood all about the street. Up behind the street were some tremendous-looking mountains, and here such people as the doctors, civil servants, &c. seemed to have fixed their abode. The most splendid views could be obtained up there right over the sea and the numerous small islands. Then the climate, which at least at that time was supposed to be somewhat unhealthy down below, was very much better on the highlands.

While I was in Townsville my greatest pleasure was to take my lunch with me in a morning and then scramble up there to some place from which the best view could be had, and sit there all day. That was a cheap and harmless pleasure, but to do so at the present time would be trespass, because all the land about there is now sold at so much per foot, and no one but the owners have a right either to the soil or the air, or even the view. It seems wrong to me that it should be so. I wonder what will become of poor people when the day arrives when all the world is thus cut up into freehold property! If I had at that time invested the ten pounds I carried in my pocket in a piece of land, it would certainly have been worth thousands of pounds to-day, and I believe I might even have been worth tens of thousands. Then I might

without further trouble have been myself a "leading Colonist" to-day!

On looking around one would scarcely think that this place and Bowen were in the same country. In Bowen everybody seemed to have plenty of time. The shopkeepers there would stand in their doorways most of their time, or go visiting one another. Then, although Bowen was so much larger than Townsville, there seemed to be no people in it. But here there were crowds everywhere, and seemingly not an idle man. People appeared rather to run than to walk. I walked up the street and looked into a half-finished building where half a dozen carpenters were at work. I watched them well. They were all men in their prime, and if they did not work above their strength they were good men assuredly! There was quite a din of hammers and saws. It was terrible! I felt very much afraid that I should not be able to match myself against any one of them, but on the principle of not leaving until to-morrow what might be done to-day, I asked one where the "boss" was? He pointed to a man alongside who also was working terribly hard, and this gentleman sang out to me from the scaffold, "What do you want, young fellow?" So I said that I wanted work.

"All right," cried he, "I'll give you a job, but I have no time to talk before five o'clock; you can wait." Then I stood waiting, and feeling half afraid to tackle the work, until the "boss" sang out "five o'clock."

What a relief every man must have felt. Each seemed to drop his tool like a hot potato. I remember well my feelings. I knew before the contractor spoke to me that he was a bully, from the way he spoke to the other man. He came up to me.

"Well, what is it you can do?"

"I am a carpenter and joiner."

"Oh, you are a German."

"No, I am not."

"What sort of a new chum are you then?"

"I asked you if you wanted a carpenter."

"Where were you working before?"

"In Bowen."

"What wages did you get there?"

"Thirty pounds a year."

"Do you know that I expect my men to earn fourteen shillings a day?"

"I will do as much work as I can, and I do not expect you to pay me more than I can earn."

"Got any tools?"

"No."

"I do not want you then!"

Did ever any one get such an unprovoked insult? I felt as if I could never ask another man for work again. Although I had learned a little English, it was far from sufficient to allow me to set up and work on my own account. I knew that very well, and although I kept telling myself that most likely here there would be plenty of other contractors to go to, yet I was in very low spirits as I went off

looking for a suitable boarding-house. The place I came to did not impress me as being either clean or comfortable. I went in at the door only because I saw on the signboard the words "Diggers' home," or "Bushman's home." I forget exactly what it was, but I understood there was "home" about it, and as I was just then longing very much for such comforts as the word "home" is associated with, I went in. It was just tea-time and about thirty men were sitting on two wooden forms around the one table, eating. The uncouth way in which they were gormandizing was terrible to witness. English working people show, I think, greater anxiety to possess what are popularly called "table manners" than does the same class where I came from. The former hold their knives and forks in faultless style, but they seem never to have learned what is the great point in table manners. This is a point on which I was very strictly brought up, and as one cannot very well criticise another's manner of eating while sitting alongside him at table, I think I might without offence give valuable advice here. It is this. Close your lips while you are eating, gentlemen. It does not matter half so much to some people how you hold your fork.

There were among the others at the table two of my shipmates, who, as they told me, were working at their trade for four pounds a week. They were dressed in the height of fashion, and would not speak Danish at all to me. One of them informed me in a sort of language that I am



sure no Englishman could have understood, that he had almost quite forgotten Danish. As I had a craving just then for sympathy, I told them how I had fared when I had asked for work, but all the sympathy I received was the remark that it was smart fellows only who were needed in Townsville. They agreed thoroughly about that, and then whenever they could repeat the formula "I get four pounds per week," they did it *ore rotundo*. Evidently they had a heartfelt contempt for one like me, who had been working for only a few shillings a week. After tea, I was, on stating that I wanted to stay for a week, shown into a small room wherein stood six stretchers, or beds, as close as could be. One had scarcely room to squeeze about among them. The middle of the room seemed to be a sort of main passage two feet wide between the beds on each side, leading to rooms beyond, and there the rest of the thirty boarders would tramp in and out. The landlord, on showing me one of these beds as mine, demanded a pound sterling of me in advance as one week's payment. "Beautiful home." "Comfortable abode." I regretted that I had left Bowen, as I thought of my clean private room there. I did not, however, pay for a week beforehand. I paid only for my supper and a shilling for the use of the bed or "home" for that night. I sat there on the bed for a quarter of an hour, listening to all the noises around me. Then I felt that I could not suffer it any longer, so I went out. It was a beautiful moon-

light night. To get out past the houses was only the work of five minutes, and I kept walking on along a road I came to until I was well past all signs of civilization. I had taken my flute with me as the best means which yet remained to soothe my troubles, and then I sat down to play. How much better I felt out there under the gum-trees! That foul-smelling boarding-house seemed to trouble me no longer. I would not return to it. Better by far to sleep out there under the open sky! I sang and played and worked myself into quite a romantic feeling. At last I fell soundly asleep.

The next day I began more carefully to look out for a boarding-house, but it was all one. There were enough of them indeed, but in all there was not one which did not to my mind look more like a rabbit warren than a "home" or a "rest," or whatever the name might be that was put over the door. A couple of places were kept by Chinamen. They at least seemed more honest, because they made no pretence of offering their guests what they had not got. All the accommodation they offered was a shelf for each man, and there seemed to be an air of "take it or leave it alone" about them which I liked. But none of these suited me, and so I went to the hotels, and for one pound ten shillings per week I got white man's accommodation: a room for myself and every civility. How anybody like my two grandly-dressed countrymen could, if they earned four pounds a week,

prefer the other place to this, I did not understand.

I might now with much satisfaction have finished my writing here by telling the reader how I obtained work the next day for fourteen shillings per day, and how I saved and persevered until I myself became a contractor—if such had been the case. But the truth must be told, and that is that I kept delaying day by day to ask any one for a job. Every day I would walk about the town, and passed and re-passed houses under erection, but I could not bring myself to go and speak to any one for fear of meeting the same fate that befell me the day I arrived. When I came home to the hotel from such an expedition, I would console myself by recounting my money and reckoning up how many Danish dollars it was. That seemed to reassure me. Certainly it went fast, but on the whole I was in no way alarmed over myself, because I knew very well that when the necessity came a little nearer I should easily get something to do. Meanwhile I could go out every day shooting, fishing, and enjoying myself as best I could.

One of the first days I was in Townsville, I went out in the main road leading to the gold diggings, and when I was about a mile or two out of town I came to a house which attracted my attention. It was very small, the walls were built of saplings, the roof was covered with bark, tin, and all sorts of odd materials. The door was made of a sapling

frame with bagging stretched across it. Yet the place had a cool, clean sort of appearance, and under the verandah in a home-made squatter's chair sat a man smoking a long pipe. Yet I should probably have passed by without taking notice of any of these details if it had not been that in front of the house, but close to the road, was erected a sort of frame like a gallows, and from it dangled in a most conspicuous way an empty bottle. Underneath was a piece of board nailed to a tree, and on it was written with chalk the one word thrice repeated: "Bier. Bier. Bier." That caused me to look at the man, and I perceived it was one of my shipmates. This man was between fifty and sixty years old when he landed nine months before with his wife and eight children. I am very certain that he did not then own more than I did myself, but he had on the voyage exhibited such a cheerful disposition, and had such a happy knack of always trying to explain things in a way that would make one think that any misfortune that might happen would have been just the very thing wanted, that he had been a general favourite. But when we came to Bowen nobody had engaged him and his eight children, and so he had been sent here, and now I saw him sitting smoking his pipe under the verandah with great gusto. He seemed as glad to see me as I was to see him, and asked me to come and sit on a box which stood alongside him, and to have a smoke out of his long pipe. Then he began to spin his yarn. His girls were at



service, the two of them, and had each ten shillings per week, and they brought it all home, for they were good girls. He had got somebody to apply for this land for him on his land order, "and here," he said, "right and left is all mine. Me and mother built the house ourselves; come inside and see."

"But," said I, "what is the meaning of that empty bottle you have hung up there?"

"Oh," cried he, "did you not see my signboard. I sell beer. I cannot understand their blessed language, but I thought if I showed them the bottle they would know what it meant, and Annie drew that signboard herself last Sunday she was home; she is a splendid scholar, you know—you should only hear her talk English. It fetches them right enough. You will see nearly everybody who comes along the road must be in here and have his beer."

Then we went inside, and there were the old lady and her children, as happy as could be. Now I had to tell my history, and after much argument my friend made me believe that the reason the contractor had not given me a job was because I had told him the truth. "You should have said you earned fifteen shillings a day in Bowen, that you would not work under sixteen shillings now; that is the way. Always tell them you can do anything."

Good old fellow! How cheerful I felt when at last I went away. I laughed to myself, too, at his

important self-confident air. If he has kept his land and sold beer to this day, I am sure he can smoke his pipe now with great complacency—unless, indeed, riches, a circumstance over which he had no control, have spoiled him.

In the hotel in which I stayed were several other lodgers, among them an elderly man with a long beard and a most fatherly air. He became daily more friendly to me, and at the end of the first week he told me he was himself a Dane, and that he had been in the Colonies a great many years. He said he had watched me with growing interest; that he generally was chary of offering his friendship to anybody, but that he now was satisfied that I was a respectable, well-meaning youth, and that his heart went out towards me. Of course the least I, under the circumstances, could do was to accept his proffered friendship in the same spirit in which it was offered, and I told him frankly all my business, and how I was still smarting under the insult I had received on my first arrival in Townsville to such a degree that from day to day I could not bring myself to ask for work again, and how, I added, my bit of money was going fast. He, on his part, gave me to understand that he was not a rich man, although several times he had made his fortune. "But," said he, "I never let the left hand know what the right hand is doing. Sometimes, as for instance now, I run myself quite short; it does not matter, I can always make enough for myself as long as God gives me strength."

I went with him to church on the Sunday, although I did not understand a word of what the parson said, but my ancient friend had already acquired a sort of proprietorship over me, and as he seemed to be intensely religious, it imparted a kind of holy feeling to me to sit near him. After church, he lectured me on religion very severely, and all the time I knew him he prayed devoutly both morning and evening. A few days after, he told me he had taken a contract from one of the storekeepers in town to cut hay. He said that a man could cut a load of hay in a day, and that he was to get thirty shillings a load for it. He would now, said he, have to buy a horse and dray, and would also have to look out for a partner. I asked him if he thought I might do, and said that if I could not work as much as he I should not expect the same pay, but that I was confident that I would not be far behind.

"Well, I might do ;" he would like to have me for a partner, but he understood that I had very little money. It would be necessary for his partner to have at least thirty pounds, as the horse and dray alone would cost forty pounds, and we should have to buy tools and to keep ourselves in rations for some time. I was very sorry that I had got only something like eight pounds. "All right ;" he would take me if I would do the best I could. He had already an offer for a horse and dray. Then we set about buying a tent and a lot of rations in a store, also scythes and one thing

and another necessary for the job. My partner advised me that we should not pay for it just then, as we were to deliver hay for the money. The same day we left with all our things packed in our swags, and went into the bush about four miles, where there was plenty of long grass suitable for haymaking, and there we pitched our tent.

Here I worked for a couple of months with the utmost eagerness. It was a time of long summer days, and from daylight to dark was I at it, doing my level best. My partner had bought a horse and a dray, and was taking hay into town every day, but he did not work much at home. Of course, as he said, he was getting to be old, and could not work as formerly; but then he did all the business, and, according to his estimate, we earned a couple of pounds every day. As for me, I worked contented and happy, although we had not yet taken any money for the hay and I had given my partner every sixpence I possessed to help in buying the horse and dray. We lived very frugally, too—at least, I did; my partner had his dinner in town, but that was only a necessity when he was bringing hay in—because, as he said, he did not believe in all this gorging and over-feeding which was customary in these latter days. As for smoking tobacco, he was much against it, and declared it to be not only a wicked but a dirty habit; so, to please him, I had given up the pipe. I made breakfast for him in the morning, and was at work before he rose. I had supper ready for



him when he came home at night, and I never spared myself or gave a thought to the unequal distribution of work between us.

One evening my partner did not come home. I was very anxious, picturing to myself all sorts of dreadful calamities which might have happened to him. In the morning I went into the town to the storekeeper, whom I understood bought the hay, but I could get no satisfaction there. They had not seen him for a week, they said, and only bought hay occasionally. I thought they did not understand me, and I went to another storekeeper, and got a similar answer. As I stood quite bewildered in the street, I saw the horse and dray coming past, and a stranger driving. On inquiry, I learnt that the man who was driving had bought the whole concern the day before for thirty-five pounds. While we were yet talking one of my countrymen came up and wanted to know about the horse and cart too, and, to make a long story short, it appeared that my mate had borrowed, on one pretext and another, from the Danes in town nearly a hundred pounds in small sums. He had also bought the horse and dray with a very small cash deposit, and sold them for cash, got paid for all the hay we had cut, and owing for our rations in one of the stores besides, he had cleared out. Benevolent-looking old hypocrite, when I found it all out, I felt as if I could have——never mind——what is the good? say no more. I had not got a copper. I went up to the hotel where I had been

staying before I had started haymaking, and began to pour out my tale of woe to the publican, with no other object than to get sympathy. The publican looked absent-minded, then he smiled : he always thought old —— had a “ smart look ” about him. “ And so he has done all of you new chums, eh ! Say it again. How was it he did it ? You are too soft for this country.”

I was on the point of leaving, when a man came in and asked me if I was old ——’s partner. I said “ yes.” Would I be so good as to pay this bill for two pounds odd shillings at once, or if I did not he would make me into sausages. This was too much. I know myself to be good-natured, and I told him so, but if he had any evil designs on me, why I would pull his nose. We had a long conversation on this matter, and at last he agreed not to annihilate me there and then, and I on my part declared myself satisfied if he would give me his pipe and tobacco and let me have a good long smoke as a sort of proof to me that he bore me no ill-will. When peace was thus restored, he became very friendly, and explained to me that he had misunderstood the matter before, and that he was very sorry for me, but that he would yet make my partner pay us all if I would only leave it to him and go home. “ Only leave it to him ” ? I had nothing else to do but to go home, because in the camp there was at least a bit to eat. So home I went. But what a change had now come about in my fortune ! Not only the loss of the money—

although that was serious enough, but there was the shock to my faith in human nature ! Who could I put faith in after this ? I began in a sort of mechanical way to cut hay again just to get away from my thoughts. Then I threw the tools as far as I could, and went to lie down in the tent with my mind in a state of blank. Where would I go, and what should I do next ? After a while, the man who had wanted me to pay a bill came and posted a bill on a tree. He inquired of me if I had a horse, and seemed very sorry for me when I told him "no." He informed me also that I must not remove anything, as to do so would be stealing. I understood sufficient of the proceedings to know that he also would be very "smart" if he could, and he was scarcely gone, before a man came with another summons, which was pasted underneath the first. This would never do, thought I. Was I to allow myself to be made a cricket-ball of by every one who chose to play with me. I must be "smart" too, and as soon as I got the idea, it struck me as an immense joke. Would it have been wicked, thought I, if I had been able to work a double game on the old swindler who had taken me in ? They seemed to show respect for the swindler, and contempt for the dupe ; but then there was the risk of cheating honest people, and that I could never do. No, that must not be. But talking about cheating and stealing, as the fellows who had posted the summonses on the trees had done, now they were trying to get paid their score out of the few things

which were left in the camp without regard to me, and had the impudence to tell me that I must not remove anything. Bosh! Was it not paid for with my own money? Certainly all there might not fetch ten shillings, but who had a better right or more need of it than I? So, as the first step in "smartness," I remembered that possession amounts to nine points of the law, and for the rest I would in my mind keep a sort of profit and loss account, and I began at once by writing down my present score and leaving open the opposite page for such circumstances as the future might have in store. Dangerous thoughts, I admit, but this is the truth, and having found a weapon in this determination, it did not take me ten minutes to make up my mind what to do.

There was a settler living not far away from where we had been cutting hay. This man always seemed to me to have a friendly air about him as he would come past occasionally, and he had always made a point of stopping to speak to me at such times. He had several times invited me to come and visit him, but I had never yet done so. I now thought I would go and see him and ask him his advice, whether he thought that I had a right to claim what there was in the camp, and if so, try to induce him to buy what there was. I accordingly went over to his place and told him all about my trouble. He was an Irishman. "Bad luck to the ould offender!" cried he, "and so he has run away. This is an awful world. Ah, me



lad, take my advice, never have anything to do with them Germans. Well, never mind, you are a German too, but that one was worse than a native dog anyhow, and so he was."

I asked him what he thought about the things in the camp, whether I might have them: there was an axe, besides two scythes, a bucket, billy, frying-pan, some old blankets and other articles, and then there was the tent. "Oh, that was all right." I could bring it all over to his place, and he would swear to any one that it was his, and he would like to see the man who would dispute it. I might come too, he said, and live with him until I got something to do. He would do much more than that, only that he had no money. This seemed to suit me in every respect, and I began at once carrying over all that was in the tent to my new friend's place; but the tent itself I let stand for any one to fight about as they thought fit, or for the Government to inherit—I did not care which. The next few days I passed with the Irishman. He was not married, and lived quite alone on this piece of land which he had taken up as a selection. The hut had only one room, and the absence of that refining influence which is generally supposed to pervade a place where women live, was painfully apparent. The Irishman knew this very well, for he had always a way of excusing the rampant disorder in the hut by saying "that the Missis was not at home, bad luck."

Under the bunk were two bags of corn piled up

in the cobs, in another corner lay some turnips and seed-potatoes; we boiled the corned beef and the tea in the one billy, and if the billy was full of meat or potatoes, when we wanted to make tea, it was only the work of a second to topple it all out into the bunk and fill the billy up with water for the tea. I am sure I now ask my friend's pardon for repaying his hospitality by describing these matters, but as I hope this history of my life will be published, it may possibly be read by young ladies, and I cannot resist the temptation to show them the faithful picture of a bachelor's den in the Queensland bush. If it were a singular instance I should not think it worth relating, but it is not; it would be more correct to say it is the general rule.

Every day I went into town and looked out for something to do, but I found great difficulty. Work was plentiful, but wherever I inquired if they wanted a carpenter, their first question was about my tools. I had no tools, and they would not engage me. One evening I was in town on purpose to speak to a contractor who had told me to call at his private residence at nine o'clock with a view to engaging me. As I was walking about trying to kill the time, I found myself standing down on the wharf, where I had come ashore the first day I landed in Townsville. I was watching the little steamer that used to run between the town and the bay, and which now seemed to be getting steam up, and in a vague sort of way I wondered whether the steamer out in the bay was

going north or south, so I asked one of the sailors. "North," said he; "they go to Batavia, but they call at the pearl fisheries at Cape Somerset. Are you going?"

I had, of course, never thought of it till that moment, but as he said "pearl fisheries" it struck me that it must be a delightful occupation to sit fishing for pearls, and that it would be worth running a risk to try to get to that place. Besides, it would be a splendid adventure. So I said, "Yes, I am going." "Have you been there before?" said he; "perhaps you are a diver?"

"Yes, I was a diver." I found out next that I should just have time to go out to my camp in the bush, to collect my swag and be back in time for the steamer. I ran all the way there and back, laughing to myself all the time, because there seemed to myself such a splendid uncertainty about how the adventure would turn out. I had got no money, but it only troubled me so far as perhaps it might make it impracticable to get on board. Anyhow, I meant to have a hard try for it. When I came back I stood watching the little steamer until the moment they were about to cast off. Then with a hue and cry I rushed on board.

As we sailed down the river the captain said to me, "Are you the diver?" "No savey." "Are you going up to the pearl fisheries?" "No savey." "Have you got a ticket?" "No savey." "Dang that fellow! Are you—— Deutcher?" "No savey." "Well, if you 'no savey,' all I can tell you is

that you shall not get on board the steamer without a ticket. You savey swim ? ”

“ Oh yes, I savey swim belong de pearl all de time ? ” “ Oh, well, I think you had better go back with us again, because they will only give you to the sharks up there, if you try any tricks on them.”

Here the conversation was interrupted by the captain having to attend to the ship, and I scrambled out of his way. It did not take long before we were out alongside the large steamer, and so as it was very close I watched my opportunity and climbed up the side and on board. There was a large coil of rope lying on the deck, and into that I crept without a thought for the morrow. I heard the ship getting under weigh and then I slept, if not the sleep of the just, at least without dreams.

Next day was Sunday. I only woke up as the sun was shining in my face, and then I got up and looked around me. We were steaming along the coast; there seemed to be nobody about but the sailors. I had a walk about the deck and a wash at the pump. Nobody spoke to me for some time, until the steward came and in a most natural way told me breakfast was ready. “ Good ! ” He is a sensible man, thought I, and I went below and had a good meal. As soon as I had well finished, the mate came in and asked me for my ticket. I had formed no particular plan of campaign, but I felt so self-confident and happy, that I was perfectly



convinced within myself that it would be impossible for any one to be out of temper with me. It is necessary to bear this in mind to believe what follows. Mirth is catching, and is irresistible when natural, but nothing but the genuine article will do here. So now the mate came up to me and said, "Ticket." I laughed and cried "No ticle." He looked rather surprised at me, and held out his hand saying, "Ticket." "Oh," cried I, laughing, while I grasped his hand, "Ticket—oh I savey you give me ticket?"

"Oh, this won't do," said he, although I could perceive my mirth was working on him. "Money, money or ticket"—at the same time he took out half a crown and showed it me. I tried to take the half-crown from him and patted him on the shoulder, saying, "Good fellow you," and when he would not give it me, I told him he was too much gammon for me altogether. At last I got him to laugh properly, and then he said I was too much gammon for him too, but that now I should have to go off with him to the captain, because he could not give me a free passage and could make neither head nor tail of me in the bargain.

"Come on," cried he; "to the captain you go."

My whole frame shook with laughter. I do not know why, I simply relate the fact. It seemed to me so strange and comical that I was now here, a regular loafer, a sort of criminal, and unemployed, a—what not, not knowing where I was going and not caring; and what would this blessed captain

do with me, or think of me? On we came, the mate and I, up to the quarter-deck. There was a good-looking man of thirty odd years of age reclining at his ease in a sort of chair, more in a lying than a sitting posture. He was playing with the hand of a lady who was sitting alongside of him, and they looked so affectionately at one another that I made sure at once they were not husband and wife! Besides these, the only other person on deck was the man at the wheel. On we came, and the mate presented me as a stowaway. I saluted the lady and the captain airily, and he spoke to me, but I paid no attention to what he was saying. I was looking at the lady and thinking of my adventure in Bowen, the first time I saluted a lady in Queensland. My sides shook with laughter until I saw the lady in the same condition; then I exploded. The lady, the captain, the mate, and the man at the wheel all followed suit! I beat my chest and called on all the saints to give me strength to stop, but I could not, and we all kept laughing until, from utter exhaustion, the lady and the captain were lying back in their chairs with averted faces, the mate was hanging over the gunwale, and I was lying on my elbow on the deck, regularly sick. Every time the captain or any of them were looking at me they made me laugh again. At last the captain, after several attempts to speak to me cried, "Go away, go away; I speak to you by and by."

I had not been gone half an hour before I was

called back again. The lady was this time sitting with her back to me. The captain said, "What have you got to say for yourself?"

I somehow felt sure that it was all right, and that the lady was going to say a good word for me, or had done so already. Anyhow I altered my tactics, and told them how it was that I had no money, and how I somehow, perhaps recklessly, but on the spur of the moment, had got on board. When I had finished speaking I felt very foolish, and as the lady turned round and looked at me, I blushed up to the roots of my hair, and felt very much ashamed. Then the captain said, "And what do you want to do at Cape Somerset?"

I did not know. "Have you no money?" "No." "No friends there?" "No." "You have been very foolish."

After a while he said: "There will be nothing for you to do at Cape Somerset and as little at Batavia. The only thing I can do for you is to put you ashore at Cardwell, here, on the coast. There is a settlement there and some sugar plantations up the river. I will do that for you, if you like."

I thanked him very much, and said I did not know what to do with myself. "All right, you can hold yourself in readiness to go ashore."

A couple of hours afterwards, the steamer was very close to land, and I saw some houses on the beach. A boat was lowered and manned by sailors, and I was told to get in. But so benevolent did

the captain prove, that they bundled in after me a lot of flour, tea, sugar, and meat, also a tent. I felt completely crushed : I sat in the boat and dared not look around ; only after they put me ashore I waved my handkerchief, and there, yes, they were waving their handkerchiefs back to me. There seemed to be a big lump in my throat. Was I in love ? Perhaps I was, I do not know, but I felt very sure that if just then I had thought that I could have obliged either the captain or the lady on board by drowning myself, I would have done it. They had put me ashore in a place where the houses which formed the settlement were hidden from my view, and I was glad of it, because I did not want to see everybody. I found a little stream of water close by, then I pitched the tent and laid myself down outside, looking after the smoke of the steamer as long as I could see the slightest sign of it. An unspeakable longing for home, a craving for sympathy, was all over me. I suppose most people have felt the same emotion. I did not go up to town for two or three days after ; I remained lying on the beach all day looking out over the sea, and half the night I would walk up and down thinking, or, perhaps it would be more correct to say, *feeling* all sorts of things.

If we would all only always remember the value of a kind word, or a little genuine sympathy, how much better the world would be ! Who shall say what I might have been to-day, or into what channels my mind might have been led, if the



captain had acted towards me as he would have been quite justified in doing—that is, if he had given me in charge of the police when we came to a shore, and if I had been just a week or two in the lock-up? I had been wronged in Townsville, and afterwards I had received the impression that it was a case of each man for himself without fear or favour. What this impression would have led to if it had not been in this happy way checked in the very beginning, is hard to say, but when at last I bent my steps towards the dozen or two of houses which formed the township of Cardwell, it was with a resolution to do my best, but not to sail again under false colours.



*CHAPTER VI.*  
*ON THE HERBERT RIVER.*







## CHAPTER VI.

### ON THE HERBERT RIVER.

FROM the glimpses I already had of the settlement, I came to the conclusion that it was of no use looking for carpenter's work here, so I went into the most conspicuous house I could see, viz., the hotel, and asked for a job of any kind. There were three or four men in the bar, dried-up looking mummies they seemed to me, but very friendly, for they began at once to mix in the conversation, and after I had told everybody all round where I came from, how old I was, what I could do, how long I had been in the country, and a lot more besides, they held a consultation among themselves, and agreed that my best plan was to go up on the sugar plantations on the Herbert River. It appeared that the mail for the plantation was taken up the river once a fortnight from Cardwell in a common boat, and my new friends, after standing drinks all round, unsolicited went to the captain about letting me go with him, and pull an oar in lieu of passage money. They asked me into dinner, as a matter of course; and who should I see waiting at the table but a German girl, one

of my shipmates. "Happy meeting." Then for two or three more days I was breaking firewood for a living, and meanwhile it seemed as if I was the admiration of the whole community, because Cardwell is, and was then, as well as the Herbert River, a fearful place for fever, and the whole population was in a constant state of disease. As for me, Queensland had so far, I believe, rather improved my appearance than otherwise. Anyhow, it was a case all the day through to answer people how long I had been in the country; then they would say, "Hah! Europe, the old country—that must be the best place, after all. Look at his cheeks!" Then I would be advised to clear out again as fast as I came, or else in three months I should look like everybody around me. It used to surprise me very much, but I could not understand it, because the climate seemed to me excellent; and as everybody seemed so kind, and I was in the best of health, I only laughed at their sayings. Meanwhile I had spoken to the man in charge of the mail-boat, and one day at noon I embarked for the plantations. It was an ordinary rowing boat, and besides myself it had two other occupants—the captain, who was a Frenchman; the other an American. They both, on ordinary occasions, each pulled an oar; but this time, as I was there, the captain took the helm and I the oar. I pulled away as hard as I could, and did not see much of where we were going, but by the time it grew dark we were past the mouth of the

river, and in smooth water. We dropped anchor in the middle of the river, because, as the captain explained to me, if we were to run ashore an alligator would be sure to try and crawl into the boat. They had appliances in the boat for boiling water, and after tea they both sat for a couple of hours spinning alligator yarns. I listened with great interest and not without fear, because the river was swarming with the reptiles. The blacks were also at that time so bad that no one dared to go overland to the plantations, unless in a large company. Here in the boat we had two loaded rifles and two revolvers, and before we reached the plantations I saw enough to convince me that it was necessary to be very careful when we had occasion to go ashore. It was also considered always necessary for one to keep watch the whole night, and as I was not sleepy I took the first watch, while the other two laid themselves down and soon snored lustily. Put there staring out into the darkness, with the loaded rifle over my knee, could it really be true, as my two shipmates had just assured me, that I was bound to catch the fever before three months were over? How did people here do when they were sick? I had asked that question also, and they had answered it by asking me if I thought anybody here was running about with a hospital on his back. And when any one died, it appeared that they rolled the body in a blanket and threw it in the river for the alligators to do the rest! These alligators, too, which might

at any time upset the boat and eat us! Would it be my fate to serve as food for one of them? Horrible thought. But I had heard that evening so much about alligators; how, if I were at any time to be caught by one I should try to stick my finger into its eye, and that it would then eject me again; the whole thing being just as if it were a most natural and common occurrence here for people to be eaten by these monsters. Then there were the blacks; they were both savage and numerous, and I had got strict orders to listen with all my ears for any surprise from them. I had taken great notice that when boiling the tea my shipmates had been very careful to conceal the fire.

Bang! crack! went the rifle. Up rushed the Frenchman and the American, revolvers in hand. I stared at them. They stared at me.

"What is the matter?" whispered the captain.

"I don't know," whispered I; "the gun went off."

It was well for me, perhaps, that I was not familiar with the French language, or else who knows but the Franco-German war might not have been renewed between myself and the captain. He screamed and laughed and swore both "Mon Dieu" and "Sacre bleu," and then he assured me that it was only because I was a German that I was afraid!

The Yankee sat and smoked his pipe, and laughed in a peculiar way; and, wild and ashamed



of myself, I could not help feeling amused at him, because he laughed, although the grimaces in his face were exactly those another man would make if he were going to cry. By and by the captain began to feel calmer, and as I was disposed only to feel angry with myself for the fear which had caused me to press on the trigger of the rifle until it went off, we were soon friends again. My watch was over, and I laid down to sleep, while the two others took their turn to watch the rest of the night. At break of day we hoisted the anchor and began to propel the boat again. I never remember anything in nature making the same impression on me as the scenery around us. The broad river, or inlet, was dotted all over with beautiful small islands, then on the mainland the hills seemed to rise to immense heights, covered with the primeval forest. The sun rose and shone with that splendour that those who have been in the tropics can alone imagine. Parrots and all other birds flew about in great numbers, screaming as if with joy.

At sunrise we went ashore on a small island about half an acre in extent, but verdant with tropical plants, quite a home of summer! Here we had breakfast and a rest before we started again. How inconceivable did it seem to me that this climate should be so unhealthy as they said it was. Anyhow, it seemed to me that to have seen this place would be justification for saying one had not lived in vain, and if the worst was to come, death seemed to me to have no

terror if one might be buried on that island. We now started off again, pulling the boat. Shortly after, the sky became overcast and rain began to pour down. First, we had taken all our clothes off and covered them up with a piece of canvas. The rain descended in sheets of water all day, and we had a rare bath all the time ; one was always baling the boat and the other pulling. I can never forget that weary day. We could not make a fire, we had no shelter, and scarcely five minutes' rest or interval from pulling. A sort of morose silence seemed to settle over us all. Long after dark in the evening did it keep on raining, and I began to wonder where we should put ourselves that night. As the others said nothing, I did not intend to be the first to knock under. Still, I was ready to drop as I pulled along in the pitch darkness, and it made it much worse that I did not know but that I might have to do it all night. At last the captain took up a horn and blew a tune on it, and a few minutes later we heard a fearful barking as of a score of big dogs. We had arrived at the place where the township of Ingham stands to-day. At that time there was only one solitary house built on high posts, with plenty of room to walk about underneath. I understood the house was the joint property of the planters further up the river, and the place was used as a sort of depôt. There was an old man in charge, the only inhabitant ; he lived there all alone, protected by a score of dogs, the most

ferocious-looking beasts I ever saw. It was also part of his duty to receive and be hospitable to such travellers as might find their way there. I was told these details while in the boat, and cautioned not to run the boat ashore before we were invited, as the dogs for certain would tear me to pieces. We heard the old fellow cooeing, and shortly after he came down to us. He had a lantern hung around his neck, and two ferocious-looking dogs were held in chains by him, striving and tearing to get at us. Some more dogs, which he said were quiet, but which did not look so, were barking and straining after us at the landing-place. My shipmates had been there before, and at last the dogs seemed to know them; but poor I had to remain by myself in the boat until the old man had got all the dogs chained again. At last I came ashore. Oh, the joy now of a fire, dry clothes, a good supper, a glass of grog, and a good bed! A good bed in the Queensland bush means two saplings stuck through a couple of flour-bags, with two sticks nailed across at the head and the foot to keep them apart.

The next evening, after another hard day's pulling, we came to the first plantation. This seemed quite a large place. I cannot now after so many years state how many people there were or what they were doing, if ever I knew it; but let it suffice to say that we were all well received at supper-time in the single men's hut, where a large crowd of men were collected. The French.

man told me I should be sure to get a job as carpenter from the planter, and that I must demand three pounds sterling per week and board for my services, nothing less. I slept that night on the dining-table, as there was no spare bunk; and I remember that night with great distinctness, on account of what I suffered from mosquitoes. The next morning I saw the planter, and asked him for a job as carpenter. "Yes," said he; I was the very man he wanted. He intended to build a house of split timber; I might give him a price. He would order a couple of horses, and we would ride out to look for timber, and if I liked the trees, so much the better. This was a thing I did not then understand anything about, and I told him so. "Never mind," said he, "I will find you something; you can make me a waggon." I told him waggons were not in my line. "What is in your line, then?" inquired he.

I understood the carpentry needed in brick-building, or at least part of it, and I could make joinery of sawn timber.

"Very well; when he wanted a brick building, or joinery made of sawn timber, he would send for me."

Then he walked off in a bad humour, and I had to go back to the boat to tell my shipmates how I had fared. That same day, at dinner-time, we arrived at the next plantation. I was by this time in very low spirits, because I did not know what was to become of me. Everybody seemed to have



an errand and something to do except myself, and I did not see how and when my services would be called into requisition; but my two shipmates kept telling me it was my own fault, and that I should take anything I could get to do. So I would, but what was it I could do? Anyhow, they kept telling me that here was the only likely place left, and I there *must* get a job. I must say I could do anything. After I had dined, the Frenchman kept poking at me and pointing out to me the planter, telling me I must ask for a job. So I mustered up courage and went up and spoke to him. "What can you do?" "Anything." "Can you cook?" "Do you mean making dinners?" "Yes." "No, I cannot do that." "Can you split fencing stuff?" "No." "Can you make brick?" "No." "Can you chip?" "What is that?" "Kill weeds with a hoe." "I never did it before." "I am afraid it is difficult to find you a job. You say you can do anything: what is it you can do?"

I was again quite crestfallen as I said, "I do not think I can do *anything*." "Well, then, I cannot find you anything to do." With that he went his way, and I came back to where the Frenchman sat, and I had to tell him once more of my hard fate. At this he began to swear in French like one demented, and asked me had I never told the planter I was a carpenter. "No." "Mon Dieu! oh, Mon Dieu, was any one like this infant!" Then he ran after the planter and

spoke to him, and soon they both came back. The planter then said he had been told I was a carpenter, and that he was prepared to find work for me at that trade, but that he would prefer me to go into the boat to the next plantation, as he knew his neighbour was much in want of me. If I did not get on there he would employ me as I came back. What a relief I felt, especially as I understood they did not expect me to build houses out of growing trees! The next evening we passed the place where I was told I could get work, but it was on the other side of the river. A man stood down by the water's edge hailing the boat. He sang out to us if we thought it possible he might get a carpenter in Cardwell. It was music in my ears. The Frenchman cried back: "We have one on the boat." The man on shore replied he wanted one to make boxes, tables, and the like. I was ready to jump out of the boat with anxiety, but I had to content myself, as my shipmates would not let me off before the return journey, and so I had to ply the oar until, far out into the night, we arrived at the furthest point of our journey, viz., the Native Police camp.

I may say a few words about this establishment. Round about in Queensland, on the furthest outskirts of settlements, some official will be stationed in charge of half a dozen aboriginals, trained in the use of the rifle and amenable to discipline. It is the duty of this official, with the assistance of his troopers, to fill the aborigines with terror, and

to use such means to that end as his own judgment may dictate. White men to hunt the blacks with would be useless, as they could never track them through the jungle, and would no doubt also be too squeamish to fight the natives with their own weapons. But the blacks themselves delight in being cruel to their own kind. Often while I was on the Herbert, would I see them coming past, like regular bloodhounds, quite naked, with their rifle in their hand and a belt around their waist containing ammunition and the large scrub knife. Their bodies would be smeared over with grease, so as to be slippery to the touch. They would then be out on an expedition. It no doubt requires all the authority their officer can command at such times to temper the wind to the shorn lamb. As the district becomes settled the aborigines grow quiet, and the native police camp will then be shifted further on. While I was on the Herbert I never saw any other blacks besides the police, although the blacks were about then in great numbers. We often saw their tracks, but they never showed themselves unless when they could not help it.

We arrived at the police camp about two or three o'clock in the morning, and were received at the landing-place by two of the troopers, who stood there without saying a word, as if they were watching for us. They were black as the night itself, and as I never saw them until I was out of the boat, I fairly ran against them. One of them

had a pipe in his mouth, and the only thing that indicated his presence was a glowing bit of coal he had stuck into it. The other one, as I already stated, I ran against, and I was quite startled as I looked into his gleaming eyes and as I stretched out my hands felt his greasy cold flesh! So I sang out, "Hi! vot name? Where you sit down?" that being the usual greeting to a blackfellow, but although none of them spoke a sentence, I was reassured in the next moment, as I saw a gentlemanly young man, dressed in a pyjamas, coming down to greet us. This was their officer, and as he led us towards the house I thought that it must be a cruel life for any white man to lead alone in such a place with nobody but a lot of howling savages to exchange a thought with. I do not think the whole clearing was more than half an acre in extent. In the middle of it stood a house built on posts eight feet high. It contained two rooms. This was where the officer lived. In the yard, or whatever you liked to call the clearing, was a fire, and around it sat or lay all these black troopers. Australian blacks will not sleep in a house if they can possibly avoid it, so this was their regular camping-place. A more wild and desolate spot than this looked to me, with all these naked savages lying in the yard, and with weapons piled about both outside and inside the house, cannot be conceived.

The next day, on our return journey, I parted company with my two fellow-travellers, and went



ashore at —— plantation, where I got a job as carpenter for two pounds ten shillings per week and my board. This was a place which scarcely could be called a plantation yet, as it was only just formed. The owner and his family lived there in a large slab-house, erected on wooden piles ten or twelve feet out of the ground. There were also a few outbuildings, but any real work was not going on, only one man, a bullock driver, being engaged on the premises. My "boss" told me, though, that he expected a hundred Kankas shortly from the South Sea Islands, and that he wanted me to fit up bunks for them, put together tables, troughs for making bread in, furniture for his own house, and such like. I perceived a few thousand feet of sawn cedar lying about, and there and then I started work to astonish the natives. I never worked with greater perseverance than then. The tools were in a fearful condition, but I soon got them into some shape. Then I rigged up a bench and made a sunshade out in the yard, where the young lady could see me working, and then it began to rain tables, sofas, chairs, and bunks, so much that I am not afraid to say that I quickly became a favourite. I found out here that I was more capable than I myself thought, because I even made a first-rate boat, in which I had the pleasure of rowing about the river with Mr. ——'s daughter, and in which she and her father afterwards travelled to Cardwell. Miss —— had been with her parents on the Herbert for a year, and

shortly after I arrived on the scene she went to a boarding-school in Sydney. On his return journey from Cardwell Mr. — brought home a servant girl, who proved to be the German girl I already have mentioned as having seen in Cardwell. I relate this matter not because I took any particular interest in this girl, but because I have by and by to write about what happened to all of us.

My "boss" was in my eyes a regular hero, or Nimrod, if you like. I went out shooting with him both morning and evening, and all Sunday as well, and became after a while quite a good shot. But one thing troubled Mr. —; it was this: that although alligators were a daily terror, he had never yet been able to shoot one. When we went out shooting he had always a rifle with him, loaded with ball, and we would crawl about some fearful places and follow the tracks of alligators, but still we had no luck. As for me, I professed to be very sorry too, that we did not run right up against one. I had great faith in Mr. —, and I do not think he had any suspicion that I was really afraid; still I always drew a sigh of relief when we came home from one of our expeditions. There is so much boasting going on in Queensland about alligators, that it is next to a proverb here when one is telling an untrue tale to say that it is "an alligator yarn," and I am, therefore, almost ashamed to write about it. Still alligators are a reality, and up there we knew it. On the





AN ALLIGATOR  
POOL.





river-bank, in front of the house was a spring, from which we got the water supply for the house but so nervous were we that no one dared to go to it without the utmost precaution. Every morning Mr. ——— would come and ask the bullock driver and me if we were prepared to fetch water. Then he would get his rifle and take up a position on the river-bank from which he could overlook the surroundings, while we went down to carry up a supply of water.

And now I will relate an alligator story, although I have been much tempted to pass it over for the reason already stated. One day after dinner Mr. ——— came to me much excited, and told me that an alligator had taken one of the working bullocks which had been lying down a few hundred yards from the house, in broad daylight too. We then went down to see about it, and there were the tracks of the bullock and the alligator. It showed plainly that the alligator must have taken the bullock in the hind-quarters and have dragged it along, because the earth was regularly ploughed up where the bullock had been holding back with its head and forelegs ; it had been dragged right down to the river's edge and then killed and partly eaten. As we ran the tracks down, we saw the alligator by the bullock, but it dropped like a stone into the water on our approach. Mr. ——— turned to me with sparkling eyes. "Now is our chance," cried he ; "to-night and to-morrow night it will come again and eat of the bullock. Then we can shoot it."

Was it not fun? Anyhow I said I would make one of the shooting party, and then he began to unfold our plan of campaign. To begin with he thought it best to delay till the next evening as the alligator would then be sure to be more quiet. We were to take up a concealed position to windward of the bullock's carcass, and await the arrival of the monster. And so the next evening came, and after tea, while it was yet light, Mr. — came and asked me if I was ready. "Yes," cried I. I was ready, and in a very ferocious spirit besides! Well, then, we would get the weapons. The two rifles were loaded, and each of us had a six-chambered revolver as well. As for me, I stuck a butcher's knife in my belt also, as a last resource, but Mr. — laughed at me for doing it and assured me that before I could find use for that I should be in the alligator's stomach. Then we went, Mr. — first and I close behind. The river-bank nearest the water was very steep for about thirty yards, then there was a gentle slope for another twenty yards or so, and on that slope the carcass of the bullock was now lying. We were very careful to have the wind against us, as the alligator is very shy as a rule, and Mr. — said it would be sure to clear off if it could smell us. Then we lay down behind some bushes in a most overpowering smell from the bullock; but what will one not do for glory? It was agreed between us that we should both fire at the same moment, and that Mr. — should give the signal. We were lying flat on the ground, and

one of Mr. ——'s legs was touching me, and it was further agreed that I was not on any account to fire before he with his leg pressed mine in a certain way. Then I was to fire into the mouth of the alligator, while he at the same moment would try to send a ball through its eye. We were lying in this position nearly up to midnight, when we heard some heavy body come creeping up the hill, but still out of sight. Now and then the noise would cease for a minute or two, then it would come on again, until at last we saw the dark mass of the alligator come crawling up to the bullock and begin to tear at it. I was not a bit nervous, because I could see it quite distinctly, but I was very impatient for the signal to fire which did not come, and I dared not move round sufficiently to look at Mr. —— either. The alligator was turning this way and that way. Now, I thought, is the time. Still no signal. Then it turned right round, and at one time I thought its tail was going to sweep us away. Just when our chance was best we heard another alligator coming crawling up the bank. It was at that moment quite impossible to fire according to the position in which the first alligator was lying, but as it was moving about rapidly I thought it best in any case to ignore as well as I could the presence of the second alligator, which we could not yet see. At last the first one began to snap its jaws in that peculiar way which only one who has seen a live alligator knows. Then came the signal. Bang! went the rifles. The

beast never moved a muscle. It was quite dead, and we could hear the other alligator tearing and rolling down into the water again. Mr. — got up and wiped his face. "I was afraid of you getting excited," said he. I admitted I was thankful the sport was over, and without giving ourselves time to measure the reptile we decamped out of the smell as fast as we could. It was fairly overpowering, and it took the best part of a bottle of Scotch whiskey, which the "boss" introduced, to make me believe that it was possible to go through such adventure and still live.

It had for a long time been the wish of Mrs. — and the children to visit their nearest neighbour, who, however, lived some fourteen miles away. One evening preparations were made for the whole family to start at daybreak next morning on the bullock dray. It was quite a perilous journey for a lady and children to undertake, as the track was through the dense jungle most of the way, and through grass eight feet high at other places, and swamps, creeks, and gullies had to be crossed. Mr. — told me that he could not possibly be back before the next night, and that he entrusted everything at home to my care while he was away, the girl included, and that I might take a holiday until they came back, so that I on no account left the premises. He also advised me that as it was possible I might have a surprise from the blacks I had better sleep for the night up in the house, which, as I have already stated, stood on high



piles, and was only accessible by means of a narrow staircase. The next morning, then, they all went away, the bullock driver and all the dogs included. Twelve bullocks pulled the dray, into which a lot of bedclothes were piled. There sat the lady and the children. Mr. — was on horseback, armed with his rifle and revolvers. The driver cracked his long whip and all the dogs barked and jumped about. I stood by seeing them off and feeling quite important too, as I was the garrison left to defend the home until the travellers should return. About dinner-time that same day two travellers came in a boat from one of the plantations and asked to speak to Mr. —. This was rather remarkable, as we scarcely ever saw any other people than the boatmen when they brought the mail, and occasionally the black trackers from the police camp, but I told them that Mr. — and the whole family had left that morning in the bullock dray. They seemed surprised.

“All of them, did you say?”

“Yes,” replied I.

“It means good-bye,” said they both. “You will never see any of them again; they have cleared off.”

I was surprised and incredulous. My friends seemed quite sure.

“And what did he say to you when they left?” inquired one.

“He told me I need not work until he came back, but that I must not leave the premises. He

also said that he entrusted everything to my care."

"My word," said they, "it is a nasty trust. Why, the blacks will be sure to rush the place one of these days, perhaps to-night, for they are certain to have seen the others going away."

Then they began to commiserate with me on what was to become of myself and the girl, as we were sure to fall into the hands of the blacks, and they offered to take us both away in the boat with them. But I could not see it in that way. I knew that in all probability we should have no visitors for ten or eleven days until the mailman came. But where was I to go? I had now a good deal of money coming to me. Who was to pay me? Besides, it might only be all nonsense. Still the responsibility seemed great. I took the girl aside and asked her if she liked to go in the boat and leave me. She began to cry, and said she would rather stay, and did not like the fellows. If there is anything that could ever make me desperate it is to see a woman cry. So I began to give the two strangers the cold shoulder, and to show them that I had a rifle, six fowling-pieces, a revolver, and any amount of ammunition, and that I would, if it was necessary, defend the place against all the blacks in the district, but neither the girl nor I would budge out of the place before we were paid, and that, moreover, we did not believe that the "boss" had cleared off, but that he would be back the next evening.

After these fellows were gone I held a council of war with the girl. We turned and twisted probabilities for or against, were they coming back or were they not? Evening came and we sat up in the blockhouse and dared not go to bed. Wherever I moved there the girl was after me. I had all the guns standing loaded alongside me, but we dared not light a lamp for fear of attracting the blacks. We sat whispering and listening. Every time the wind would rustle the leaves in the garden the girl made a grab at me and cried, "There they are! There they are!"

At last I induced her to go to her room, and then I dozed off myself, and did not wake up before it was broad daylight. The first thing we did that morning on coming downstairs was to look for tracks from the blacks, to see if they had been about. I was not a very good tracker then, but we found what proved to our entire satisfaction that the aborigines had been about in great numbers. This terrified the girl completely, and she upbraided me for having slept during the night, and implored me not to do so again; also she wished she had gone with the strangers the day before; and then she began praying in great excitement that it might not be her fate to fall into the hands of savages. Of course all this had its influence on me, and as the day went on we completely discarded the possibility of our employers returning, and only thought of how best to protect ourselves from the blacks. I made up my mind, therefore, that

the time had now arrived for me to show myself great and brave, and at all events to sell my life dearly. Good generalship, however, was likely, thought I, to do more for me than bravery unassisted by judgment, and for that reason I began to think how to act so as to be prepared for the worst. I knew this much, that the greatest danger from a surprise would be about sunrise. But as I was alone I could see that it would be impossible for me to defend the whole property. I must therefore retire to the main house, which, standing isolated and on high piles, would offer a good fortification. But if I had to abandon the outhouses, they would then fall into the hands of the enemy and he would be enriched by all there was to be found in them. I must, therefore, while I had time, carry everything I could up to the house, and, perhaps, it would be better to burn the outhouses down afterwards, so that they might not serve as a hiding-place for the blacks. I would see about that, but my first duty was to carry everything upstairs, and at all events commenced. No sooner said than done. The girl and I carried everything we could lay our hands on, upstairs. I also carried up water enough to last us for a fortnight or more, three large tubsful. All the firewood that was lying handy I also humped up, although there was no fireplace upstairs; but I wanted to do all I could, and in my energy I could not be still.

In this way the day passed and evening came again. As no one had returned what hope we



might have had was now dead, and as for me I felt like a glorious Spartan, quite certain that the blacks would come and that I should let daylight through every one of them. All my guns, of course, were loaded, and I was showing them off to the girl, explaining to her that it was my intention, after having defended the door as long as I could, to retire from room to room and keep up the war all the time. But she was nevertheless timid, and I feared much that she should, by taking hold of me, which indeed she did all the time, prevent me from firing, and I asked her, therefore, again to retire to her room. She implored me to let her stay with me, and said she did not mind so that we might die together. Then she began to hug me. What new and unexpected horror was this? Was this a man-trap, or what? Was there not trouble enough already? Surely, thought I, if ever a man needed a stimulant to keep up his pluck, I am that man. Happy thought! I knew where the "boss" kept his whiskey. I went to the cupboard and took a long, deep pull at the bottle. "Dearest Amelia," cried I, "remember that in the time of our glorious forefathers it was the duty of the Danish maidens to hand the cup to the warriors, both before they went to battle and when they came home. Do now! Let me. Oblige me to drink of this bottle. It is only schnapps. Do! That is right. Here is luck! And death and destruction to our enemies! And now retire to your room. Good-night. Nothing shall harm you. Barricade the door from the

inside. Let me lock it from the outside. And now," cried I, "I make it impossible for any one to get near you. Here goes the key."

With that, having turned the key twice in the lock after her, I threw it out of the window as far as I could! I felt then as bloodthirsty as any savage. Why did these blacks not come? The only thing that puzzled me, as I traversed the house from one shutter to another, was what I should do if they came underneath the house. They might then fire the building. No, they should not. I would have them yet. I would take the two-inch augur and bore holes all over the floor, so that I might shoot through. I was soon boring away making holes for a long time right and left, when the girl whispered, "What are you doing?"

"I am boring holes," cried I, "in the floor to shoot through. Shall I bore a hole in your door? Then you could kill half a dozen with a revolver. If you have a mind, I will."

"Oh, there they are!" cried the girl.

"Ha, where? Come on!"

"Stop, you fool, it is the master and the missis. Don't you hear the whip? Let me out."

"Master and missis? I cannot let you out. I have thrown the key away."

Then it dawned on me what a fearful ass I must presently appear. It is impossible for me to keep on with the particulars. I could not find the key again and let the girl out. The floor was spoiled, the house upside down. I should have been game

to have fought his Satanic Majesty himself, but to face the contempt of the "boss" and good, kind Mrs. ——— was terrible. So I talked through the door at the girl and told her to say, if any one made inquiries for me, that I was not at home. With that I decamped, and did not present myself before the next midday. After a while the matter was only referred to as a joke.

I should have liked very much to have been able to write a detailed account of the whole twelve months I spent at this place. I am quite sure that if truly written, much of it would prove interesting to people who never were so far north, but I must of necessity pass quickly over many things of which I should have liked to write more fully, or else I shall never come to the end of my travels. Suffice it, therefore, to say that the Kanakas arrived in great numbers; that the "boss" and I went to Cardwell on horseback to fetch them; that a lot of white men were also brought together on the plantation; that I was overseer, or "nigger driver," over part of the Kanakas for some time; that I, during the twelve months, gained a good deal of colonial experience: learned to ride, drive bullocks, split fencing stuff, &c., also how to build slab-houses, as they are called—that is, to go into the bush, and with the help of a few tools, single-handed, to make a good house out of the growing trees. All this I learned, more or less, and then when I had been there about twelve months I caught the fever. This

fever is, I believe, peculiar to certain parts of North Queensland; it is not deadly, but very common, indeed my impression is that there was not a man on the Herbert River who had not got it more or less. It comes with shivering of cold, followed by thirst and utter exhaustion, once a day or once every second day. Most people are able to work all the time they have it until they feel the "shakes" coming over them. Then perforce they must lie down, but they generally get up to their work again after the prostration which follows is over. With me it was different. A couple of weeks of it made me so weak that when I felt myself strongest I could only stagger about with the help of a big stick. I had built a carpenter's shop, and my room was off that. Then I would lie down of an evening on the bed, with bedclothes piled on me enough to smother one, and still the gasping and the "shakes" would gradually commence. The very marrow in one's bones seemed frozen, while the teeth would rattle in the head, and the breath would come and go with fearful quickness. After a couple of hours of this, heat and prostration would follow, coupled with terrible thirst. Of course there was no hospital, and there was no one to hand one a drink. When I properly understood the matter, I would always place my wash-basin in the bed, filled with water, so that when the time came I could lean over and drink, because I was too weak to lift a billy can or a pint pot off the floor. But



when I upset this basin, which happened once, my sufferings were intense. I remember on two or three occasions when I had no water how I tried to get out of bed, how I fell and lay on the floor for hours, then crept on my hands and knees out around the shed to where a bench stood with a tub of water on. There I would sit or lie over the water for hours and drink. Such a matter as this excites no sympathy in a place like that. There were now a lot of other men, and most of them had a touch of the fever as well. If I had slept among other men I have no doubt some one would have given me a drink, but to ask any one to sit up with me, or disturb their night's rest on that account, would have been asking too much, I fear. Then when I had been alone before the new hands arrived, I had shared pot-luck with my employer and his family, but now it seemed as if one was only lost in a crowd. I had nothing to eat but half-putrid corned beef and bread, served on a dirty tin plate, tea of the cheapest sort, boiled in a bucket, and sweetened with dirty black sugar, was my fare too. How could any sick person eat or drink such stuff? As I write now it seems to me it is enough to cause a strong man to die of slow starvation, and yet it is the ordinary average diet put before working men all over the Queensland bush twenty-one times a week. One day Mrs. ——— came down and asked me very sympathetically how I was getting on. So I showed her my plate with my dinner on, covered with

flies as it was, and very unappetizing indeed, and upbraided her and her husband for serving such rations. "Dear me, how shocking! None of the other men complained. Was the meat bad?" Then she assured me I should have anything I wished for, and for the last few days I was there I was constantly invited to their own table, although I scarcely could eat anything even there. But I thought I had been there long enough, and when the mailman came in his boat I took a friendly leave of my employer and his family, and was assisted down into the boat. I had with me then my cheque for a hundred pounds sterling, and another for seven or eight pounds.

*CHAPTER VII.*

*LEAVING THE HERBERT—RAVENSWOOD.*







## CHAPTER VII.

### LEAVING THE HERBERT—RAVENSWOOD.

I HAD again no particular idea as to where I would go, further than that I wanted to regain my health. But oh, for the sweetness of liberty and money! I needed not to say anything about money to my old travelling companions in the boat; they knew I must have a good cheque, and their attentions were in proportion! Perhaps I wrong them. Perhaps they would have been just as careful to my wants if they had known me to be penniless. At any rate, a sort of bed was made for me in the stern of the boat, and offers to procure for me anything I wanted from the stores on the plantations were profuse. But I wanted for nothing more than to lie as easily as I might, because I really was very sick. There had been a public-house built somewhere a mile from the river-bank since I had passed that way before, and when we came to the place where a track led from the water up to it, my two oarsmen proposed to go up to have some refreshment, and promised to be back directly. Of course I could not go with them. When they were gone some time a little

pig which they had in a bag in the boat began to find its way out. I thought it a pity to allow it to escape, and yet I had not strength to get up, but without calculating the consequences I rolled myself over until I lay on the top of it. Never shall I forget the howling of that pig in my ears, for I believe over an hour, until the men came back. The bag had somehow got mixed in my clothing, and I could not either free myself or the pig, else I would gladly have let it go. At last the men came back and got us separated.

When I came to Cardwell I thoroughly enjoyed, although I was sick, the luxury of lying in a clean bed with white sheets, and mosquito curtains all around me, and to have one of the servants at the hotel coming to my door all day long asking if she could do anything for me. There was neither doctor nor chemist in the place, but one of the storekeepers came and looked at me, and sold me some medicine which in a short time drove the fearful "shakings" I had away. Meanwhile, as there was no other communication with the outer world than "the schooner," which ran between Cardwell and Townsville, I had inquired when the schooner would be in as I had decided to go to Townsville again. On the same day that the ague had for the first time left me, I was told that the schooner would be ready to run out at eleven o'clock at night. I was then so careless of myself, or so foolish, that I, at that hour of the night, for the first time in a fortnight, got out of my bed and

went on board the craft. It was only a sort of fishing smack, rowed by two men, who had a small enclosure somewhere on board where they could be dry. For passengers there was no accommodation whatever. In the hold, which was open, was nothing but some old sails, rusty chains, empty boxes, and the like. Two or three more passengers came on board, who at once secured the best places in the hold, while I, who for the first time for many weeks felt remarkably well, sat up on the deck enjoying the strong breeze, and even tried to smoke a pipe. But any North Queenslander will tell you that when one has had fever he has to be extra careful of not catching cold. I did not know that just then, but in a very short time I did. I got a fearful toothache. My enervated system did not feel able to hold up against this new affliction, and so I threw myself down among the ropes and boxes in the hold. There I lay, while the pain gradually increased. The wind was against us, and it took eight or nine days before we reached Townsville. During that time my agony grew more acute every day. I had neither strength nor energy enough to stand on my feet. My head swelled up to a fearful extent. My mouth was in such a state that I could not swallow, and I gradually lost power to open my mouth or to speak. When we had been two days out I raised myself on my elbow to try to drink some tea and eat some mashed bananas, which some one gave me in a pint pot. I could not swallow, so I laid myself

down again and did not after that touch food. I heard them speak about me on deck, and say that they ought to have found out my name, because I should scarcely last out unless the wind changed. I heard this distinctly, and laughed to myself, because I knew I was not going to die just yet. Still to all their inquiries I could not reply. One day I heard a Dane speaking in my ear; where he came from, or where he went to, I do not know, but he asked me, "Are you a Dane?" I grunted. Then he said, "What is your name?" I tried to stutter it out from between my teeth time after time, but he could not understand, and kept on, "Say it again." At last he gave it up. Then he asked me if there was anything he could do for me? what ship I had come out in, and so on. But I was so disgusted with my own inability to use my tongue, that otherwise so ready a friend of mine, that I made no further attempt to speak, and my countryman disappeared again. There was now only one thought that possessed my mind, viz., to get to Townsville, and when there to have all my teeth pulled out. Of course it was more a relapse from the fever that was wrong with me than tooth-ache, but I did not know it. I lay in a daze day after day, every time the boat gave a lurch my head would strike against something, and the agony I suffered cannot be described. At last the skipper took hold of me and cried, "Well, stranger, here we are in Townsville; where shall we take you to?"



It came on me so unexpectedly that it seemed again to send the life-blood through me. I stared around me and saw that we were lying close to the wharf.

Up I jumped, to the great surprise of the skipper, and leaving my swag behind me, and holding on with both hands to my head, I staggered ashore. It was about eight o'clock in the morning when I landed. I knew it because I heard all the breakfast bells ringing from the hotels, and although I did not feel hungry, yet it reminded me that I had eaten nothing for two weeks. On I staggered like a drunken man. People seemed to look surprised at me, and to go out of their way for me. I came to a chemist's shop. He also looked at me in a disgusted sort of way. I took up a pen and wrote to him that I wanted all my teeth pulled out. He felt my pulse. "My friend," said he, "I think you had better go to a doctor."

I gave him to understand that I was tired, and did not know where the doctor lived.

"Wait," cried he, "I will get a man to go with you."

Then he went out of the shop. As I turned round I saw a very large mirror, in which I beheld my own image from head to foot. At first I did not realize it was myself as I stared at it. Would my own mother have known the picture? I hope not. Unkempt, unwashed for nearly a fortnight, my hair hung in matted knots about my face. My

whole head was swollen to such an extent that to describe it as I saw it would seem exaggeration. Add to this a graveyard complexion in the face, and an emaciated form, dressed in an old crimean shirt, dirty moleskin trousers and blucher boots, and you have the picture I beheld of myself as I stood looking. I felt my knees giving way under me, made a grab at the counter and fell. The next thing I remember was that I was lying on a nice bed, in a room which proved to be in the adjoining hotel, and that a doctor was there. With consciousness my agony returned, and I again preferred my request in writing that he should pull all my teeth out. "Yes, that is all very well," said he, "but we must first try to break your mouth open. You must go to the hospital. I will give you a ticket. What is your name? Have you no money?"

I took out all I had got, my one hundred pounds' cheque and some change, and laid it on the table. At the same time I wrote to him on a paper and asked him to take charge of it and give me the balance when I asked for it. I also asked him to order anything I wanted and to spare no expense. Then the doctor suggested to call in a colleague that they might consult, and when the next doctor arrived they agreed to give me chloroform, but after great preparations had been made and a sponge held to my nose for a minute or two without having any effect on me, they again decided that I was too weak for chloroform, but as I, half

crying, beckoned to them to do in my case what had to be done, one of them, with his knee on my chest, put an instrument between my teeth while the other held my head back and somebody else sat behind my chair and held my arms. My mouth came open. I will not unnecessarily prolong the agony, only to state that I felt relieved shortly after and that somebody with the utmost tenderness was bathing my head. I had now nothing to do but to allow people to wait on me. I stayed in the hotel for two days, when the doctor's own buggy came for me and I was driven to the hospital. So that the reader may not be under the impression that I wear false teeth, I would like to say that not a tooth was pulled or any other surgical operation performed. I now got better rapidly. It seemed impossible to feel sick in that hospital. I had a large private room and broad verandahs outside. From my bed I could lie and watch the ocean all day and try to count the islands. My friend, the doctor, came also every day, and any extra comfort I wanted was quickly procured. As I grew better I would sit and bask in the sun down among the rocks by the shore in that half-unconscious but blissful condition which I believe is common to all convalescents, or a couple of hours before meal-time I would lie on my bed watching the sun and its shadows on the floor so that I might be prepared and lose no time the moment the man came with the dinner. Oh, for the ravenous hunger with

which I could eat! Although I had double the ordinary allowance, yet after a month's stay in the hospital, I had to leave it for very hunger's sake. I then settled my bill with the doctor, who charged me very moderately, and went to live in a hotel in town. When I was perfectly cured and myself again I could easily have obtained work in town at my trade for four pounds per week, but I had a sort of dislike to the place, which decided me to go up to the gold-diggings and try my luck there. The nearest diggings were at Ravenswood, some hundred and thirty miles inland. Other diggings were scattered behind that place, but to reach them I understood I had to go to Ravenswood first, and that it was as good a place as any. I bought two horses, with all necessary appendages, such as saddle, pack-saddle, bridles, &c. They cost me about thirty pounds. I put thirty pounds more into the bank as a sort of reserve fund in case of accident, and after paying my way so far, and buying a few necessary clothes, I had only some nine or ten pounds left. So one morning I packed the one horse with my swag, containing clothes and blanket, in the large saddle-bags. I had small bags containing flour, tea, sugar, and other necessary things for a journey through the bush, because, although the road I had now to travel was a beaten track, yet it is a Queensland custom on all occasions to be as independent as possible. Besides, when one sets out for a ramble, there is no saying where one is going to pull up, and



it seems so pleasant to know that one is all-sufficient in his own resources, without requiring any aid from wayside inns. So at least did I think as I rode out of the town; and as this was my first experience of what we in Queensland call going on the "wallaby track," I enjoyed it immensely.

The way a man acts when travelling like this, is just to please himself. When a fair day's journey is done, one begins to look out for a likely spot for grass and water, and having found that, you get off the horses and hobble them out—that is, having freed them of their load, their forefeet are tied together with a pair of strong leather straps in such a way that they can only totter slowly about. Having done that a fire is made, the billy is slung on for tea, and when supper is over, a smoke, a yarn—if there is a mate—and then a roll in the blanket with a saddle for a pillow.

There is often a lot of argument about what is a fair day's journey on horseback. Of course it is a matter which never can be decided, because so much depends upon the horses, the road, what the horses get to eat, &c., but I do not believe many careful travellers will take their horses more than twenty miles a day for a long journey, and then rest them occasionally, but to hear some people talk one would think their horses could go a hundred miles every day. In Queensland travellers have sometimes to ride forty or fifty miles between watering-places. Most horses can do it, if taken care of, but not every day. When travellers meet

on a Queensland road their first question after greeting is, "How far is it to water?" and the distance between watering-places is practically what decides a day's journey. In times of drought these water-holes get scarce or dry up completely; rivers stop running; then it behoves the traveller to look out where he goes. If misfortune happens, or he has not calculated rightly the endurance of his horse, or the water-hole on which he depends should be dried up when he arrives there, then he is likely to perish! As for myself, I have on more than one occasion arrived in a parched condition at a water-hole, only to find a lot of dead cattle bogged in the soft mud, and still have been compelled to drink the pint or two of putrefied water that might be left. The reader will therefore see that travelling in the Queensland bush is not exactly a perpetual picnic.

Nothing of importance happened to me on this road, unless I were to mention that when I was about half-way I met a swag's-man, that is, one who carries his swag on his own back and has no horses. This fellow asked to let him put his burden on my horse, which I let him do. I then, by talking to him as we went along, found out that he had neither money nor rations, and as we were only a few miles from Hugton Hotel I promised to pay for dinner at that place for us both. Arrived at the hotel, I ordered a first-class dinner for two; it was five shillings. The table was laid for us with a big roast of beef and a plum-pudding.

After we both had eaten what we wanted, my fellow-traveller put nearly all the remaining food into his bags and decamped, in spite of my protestations. I remember well how scandalized I felt! Otherwise the road was not lonely; every day I passed waggons hauled by sixteen or eighteen bullocks each and filled with merchandise for the diggings. There were also other travellers, both on foot and on horseback, but I did not go myself in company with any, and so at last, one forenoon, I saw the township of Ravenswood lying before me. I stopped the horses to have a good look.

At last I was on a gold-field. What a magic spell there seemed to me in the words. All the old fallacious ideas connected with the word crowded into my mind. Runaway nuns dressed in men's clothes, princes working like labourers, and labourers living like princes—"looking for gold!" Had I not better begin at once?

As I came nearer I saw what seemed to me wells on all sides and tents near the wells. Then as I looked at the ground again I became fearfully excited. Big nuggets of shining gold were lying all around on the road. Was it possible? Surely I knew gold when I saw it. I got off the horse and picked it up. Not pure gold, though. But surely half of it was gold. It glittered all over. I picked pieces up as I went along and fairly howled with joy as I filled my bags. Think of those fools coming behind with their flour-bags and of all the empty waggons I had met going

down, while I was finding a fortune before I reached the diggings! At the place where I had now come, they could have loaded all the waggons quickly. I could not carry more as I went further, ruminating over the matter. Now the whole ground right and left was glittering all the way into town. I threw the stuff all away again. It could not be gold! Then, with a voice shaking between hope and fear, I asked a man who came by, what that was. He told me at once it was "rubbish." "Did you think it was gold?" asked he.

"No; but I thought there might be gold in it."

"Yes," said he, "so there was, but it did not pay to extract it."

In this way somewhat sobered, I rode further and arrived in town, where the next day I pitched a tent I had bought somewhere handy to the other tents, put the horses in a paddock and looked about me.

I will not attempt a long description of this the first gold-field I was ever on. There was an ordinary street composed of hotels, boarding-houses, and stores, on both sides of the road. Behind the street were tents in which the diggers principally lived. Everywhere were earth-mounds where some one was or had been busy rooting the ground about. The reefs were each surmounted by an ordinary windlass, where a man would stand hauling up the quartz all day long. Such was the picture presented at a superficial glance at Ravens-



wood, and I think the description answers for all other Queensland gold-diggings. Nearly all the people boarded in two boarding-houses kept by Chinamen, one on each side of the street. I think there must have been two or three hundred boarders in each. They were both alike, two large bark-houses, no floor, only two immense tables with forms on each side. On these tables were at meal-times every conceivable delicacy in season, and up and down between the tables an army of Chinamen would run round waiting on their guests. During my various fortunes in Queensland, I have often paid two or three pounds per week for board in hotels, and I have paid half-a-guinea for a ticket to a public feast, but it has always been my impression that nowhere was such good or luxurious food served out as in these boarding-houses. It would simply be impossible to compete with them. The charge was one pound per week, payment beforehand, and those of their customers who wanted sleeping accommodation might, without extra charge, fix themselves up as they liked in some sheds behind. There were also many hotels in town, but, as far as I could see from the outside, their "takings" were more across the bar than otherwise, as the Chinamen seemed to monopolize the boarding-house trade. All over Australia, but especially in Queensland, there is a bitter feeling against Chinamen. People say that they ought to be forbidden to come to the country, because they work too hard and too cheaply, and eat too little

at the same time ; consequently we shall all go to the dogs. How is this ? Surely " there is something rotten in the state of Denmark." A white man is always praised if he is hard-working and frugal. It seems a contradiction to abuse one for what is commended in another ! This is an awful world. Some people say we are poor because we work too much, and run ourselves out of work. Others say we do not work half enough, and that that is the reason. Some say that Protection is a panacea for poverty, others swear by Free Trade. In Australia they want to turn out the Chinamen because they work too much ; in China they want to turn out the whites, I suppose for the same reason. Of all countries, I believe, Australia certainly included the greatest majority of the people living in different degrees of poverty, and work is getting to be as scarce here where the population does not count one to the square mile, as it is in Denmark where there are four hundred inhabitants to the square mile. Of late years one more theory has sprung up, and its disciples aver that all our poverty, despite our hard work and frugal fare, is due to the fact that the earth on which we live is sold in large or small parcels in the open market like tea and sugar, and that the owners of the earth can in the shape of rent extract the greatest part of our earnings. I ask the reader's pardon for this little digression, but it seems to me to be an interesting question, and it would at least be desirable if we all could agree

whether it is Chinamen, Free Trade, or Protection, or what not, whom we really want, because there is "something rotten in the state of Denmark."

I took my board, like everybody else, with the Chinamen and lived in my tent not far away. I occupied myself in prospecting, or learning how to prospect, but what little gold-dust I could find was not worth coming all the way for. I soon got tired of that, and one day I went and asked for a job of carpenter's work in a large Government building I saw going up.

Before I proceed further I must explain that a certain fixed scale of wages existed here for most occupations, and this scale was very jealously guarded by the people. It was three pounds per week for miners in dry claims, three pounds ten shillings in wet claims, bricklayers sixteen shillings per day for eight hours, carpenters fifteen shillings, &c. I had heard this but I had not believed it. I took it that those figures represented what men would like to get rather than what they actually got, and while I worked for a master I always preferred to put my pride in earning what I got, rather than, perhaps, getting what I did not earn. I understand the importance now of keeping up wages, but at that time I did not, and when the carpenter said he would give me twelve shillings a day and find tools not only did I think myself well paid, but I had no idea or care whether others got more or less.

Beside myself there was an American negro

employed as carpenter. He seemed a very morose sort of individual, but I took no notice of him and was hopping about all day, giving as I thought as much satisfaction to others as to myself. I often heard the "boss" grumble at the negro, and occasionally I would be set to put him right about what he was working at. This happened one afternoon as the "boss" went away shortly before five o'clock, and I was consequently explaining to him out of my wisdom, when he suddenly asked what wages I was getting. I told him with great pride I was getting *twelve* shillings a day.

Squash came a stick down over my head, then he flew at my throat and kicked and belaboured me in a terrible way. At last he flung me with awful violence out on the verandah, got hold of me again and threw me outside. He was two or three times as big a man as I, and I could not at all defend myself against him, nor had I any idea why he had thus maltreated me; but as there was no one to appeal to, I, in a terrible rage, ran home to my tent for the gun. It stood there loaded, and I took it up and started back again along the main street. The blood was running down my face, and I howled to myself with rage as I ran. I meant to shoot him as dead as a herring.

"Halloa!" cried the people, "there is a fellow running amuck," and soon there was a whole crowd behind me, intent on watching the sport.

But I must now go back in time a little. There



was at that period in Ravenswood a Danish digger, whom I had met and who had been very friendly to me, and both because he plays an important part in the next few pages I have to write, and because I have entitled this book "Missing Friends." I think he deserves mention, as he indeed had been, and is no doubt yet, "a missing friend." He had been a farmer in Denmark, what we in Danish call a yardsman, who owned his own freehold. When the war with Germany in 1864 broke out, he was called on to serve in the artillery. He was married then, had two children, and was, like all Danish farmers, in extremely good circumstances. During the war he was taken prisoner by the Germans, but was by some mistake reported dead by the Danish authorities. He told me that he wrote home as soon as he could, but the letter never reached his wife. Shortly after he tried to escape from the Germans, and, being caught, defended himself desperately. For this offence he was condemned to three years' hard labour on the fortifications of some place in the south of Germany. For one reason and another he did not write from there. Partly he was not much of a writer, partly he objected to the enemy reading his efforts, and as he knew his wife had plenty to live on, and that his neighbours at home would help her to run the farm, he neglected writing, and as the time went on pictured to himself in rosy colours the happy surprise he would give his wife and them all at home when he *did* return. At last

the time arrived when he was set free, and started for home. Meanwhile his wife had bemoaned him as dead, and what little hope his friends might have had for him died when he did not return at the end of the war. It did not take long before one suitor after the other presented themselves, and a couple of years later the wife got married again, with the full consent and approval of all concerned.

One day, when sitting at dinner on the farm, the wife saw her first husband coming in at the door. With a scream of joy and excitement, she rushed towards him. (Tableau.) Husband No. 2 was as honourable a man as husband No. 1. There was a second family. What was to be done? They made a sad but friendly compact. My friend took the eldest child with him, and went to Australia, after having got back a fair amount of his own cash. This man now came from his work, and as I rushed down the street, we met. I did not see him, but he saw me. "Hulloa, countryman, what is the matter? Stop! where are you going?"

I tried to escape him, but he had hold of the gun. We struggled for possession and the stock broke. When the gun broke my hope of revenge fled as well, and in the relaxation which followed I sat down on some steps and actually cried. I admit that it is sometimes as hard for me to write about my weakness as about my folly, but I will ask the reader to remember what I already have written here. The truth must be told. There was

now a large and sympathetic crowd around us, to whom I related how the negro had maltreated me without any provocation, and while I spoke I could see that the chances were that I would yet have revenge, because all sorts of remarks would fly about, such as: "The poor fellow had pluck, by Jove;" "Would you have shot him?" or, "Such a rascally negro should not be allowed to strike and half kill a white man;" "I think I can flog him;" "So can I, and I will;" "No Bill! you cannot!" "Let me, you are not heavy enough!" "No," cried the Dane, and struck a crushing blow in the wall of the house by which we stood; "he is my countryman, and any one who strikes him, him I will strike. Where is that negro? Only let me see him."

I went with a sort of pious joy in front of the whole crowd up to the negro's tent. When he saw us all coming, he thought they were going to mob him, and only asked for fair play. He would fight them all, man for man, and as for me, he had only struck me in open fight because I was running down wages, working for twelve shillings a day. I was surprised how much sympathy this statement created, but my countryman cut it short by saying he would fight first and argue after. "All right, I'm your man," cried the negro; "only pull off your shirt. I am dying to commence."

They both pulled off their shirts, and some willing assistants from the crowd got behind each combatant to watch his interest in the coming

struggle. It was easily seen now that my countryman was a very strong man. His arms, his shoulders, and his deeply curved back were swelling with muscles. In his face sat a determination which boded his opponent no good. Still, my heart sank as I looked at the negro, who was prancing about as in irresistible joy over what he deemed his easy victory. He seemed little short of a giant. They were just beginning to spar, when a seedy-looking individual came forward and cried, "Hold on, gentlemen, hold on, just one minute. It seems that we are going to see a splendid piece of sport, and I think we ought to improve the occasion a little. I will lay two to one on our coloured friend—two to one on Mr. Jones!" Nobody took him up, when the negro said, "I don't mind if I lay a pound or two on myself; any one on?" I looked at my countryman. He said, "Have you got any money on you?" "Yes," said I, "I have got over ten pounds!" "Lay it all," said he. "Oh, but if we should lose?" "Death and destruction, we don't lose; lay it all." "Right you are! I lay ten pounds to twenty against the nigger—ten to twenty—ten to twenty—who will take me up?"

At last the amount was gathered, but the question arose in my mind whether the first promoter of the "sweepstakes" might be trusted with the stakes. I asked my friend in Danish, before I handed the money over; he said, "Just give it to him; it is all right. If we lose, we have nothing



more to do with the money, but if he won't give up the stakes to us after I have flogged the nigger, I will flog him too ! ”

Now began the terrible fight. The negro had both strength and science, and for a long time it seemed as if my countryman was utterly done for. It began to get dark and still they fought, but the longer it lasted the more equal seemed the battle. At last it began to turn ; at every round my countryman would charge the negro with a loud hurrah ; in another quarter of an hour it was simply a matter of knocking him down as fast as he got up ; at last the negro was lying on the ground with his nose downward, and could not get up again, while the Dane, stronger than ever, was jumping all over the ring calling on him to get up. As he did not get up, the Dane ran up to a man who held a riding-whip in his hand, wrenched it from him, and belaboured the negro's head and back with it until he quite lost consciousness. I admit if I had dared I would have tried to prevent that part of the performance, but neither I nor anybody else stirred. Of course I was not sorry when my friend and I went home together, our ten pounds having swelled to thirty. Another advantage I had over this matter was that I had to promise not to work under current wages again, and when I came to work the next morning the “ boss,” who had heard of the fight, at once agreed to pay me fifteen shillings a day. As for the negro, he did not turn up and I have never seen him since.



*CHAPTER VIII.*

*SHANTY-KEEPING, PROSPECTING, THORKILL'S  
DEATH.*







## CHAPTER VIII.

SHANTY-KEEPING, PROSPECTING, THORKILL'S DEATH.

SOME time after this my friend and countryman came to me one evening about nine o'clock with a very important air, and told me he had heard of a new find of gold some thirty miles distant, and that there would be sure to be a terrible rush as soon as it became generally known. As for him, he would like to go if I would go with him and be his mate, because, as he put it, he was sure I was lucky. He could not well have made a greater mistake, but anyhow I was flattered and agreed to go. Then I found he wanted to go at once. I had a few days' wages coming to me, but I went to my employer's house at once and got my cheque. That we changed in a public-house and went to our tents, saying nothing to anybody about our intentions. Having got our swags ready, we, more like thieves than anything else, knocked the one tent over and were off. My friend's tent remained, and my horses were in a paddock with saddles and belongings; there was no time to get them, and suspicion would have been created had we tried.

We rather ran than walked, but we were scarcely a mile out of town before we overtook some six or seven others bent on the same journey. The first twenty miles ran on a good road ; that would be as far as we could go that night, because the next ten miles were only a blazed track right through the bush made by the prospectors, and could only be safely traversed in the daylight. On the whole journey we were both overtaken ourselves, and overtook other people, until, when we arrived at the camp, we numbered a score or more. Here we found another score of diggers sleeping or smoking, waiting for daylight. It was a moonlight night, and I could see that we had arrived at a place where a few humpies stood in seeming disorder round about. There was also a public-house, and it was in the street in front of that, that the whole army halted. I was both hot and tired, and as my mate suggested that we had better get an hour or two of sleep, I laid myself down and slept. I woke up again as my mate was shaking me. It was just break of day ; still we seemed late, for everybody was up and stirring. There was no time for a billy of tea, or for ever so slight a stretch : it was up and away. Oh, how tired I was, and stiff, and footsore ! I would not have minded if I might have started quietly, but this seemed like a race. Although I lost no time, yet I was the very last through the little street with the heavy swag on my back. My mate was beckoning to me as he, also late, ran a few hundred feet in front, and then disappeared

amongst the trees. I felt irritable, as I often do before I have had my breakfast. I came by a baker's shop, over the door of which was written, "Cold refreshing summer drinks sold here." The baker and his wife, and a young girl also, were peeping out through the half-opened door, and seemed to enjoy the spectacle of the crowd racing down the street. I said to myself, "Bother running like a fool here, I am going for a bottle of beer."

The baker asked me if I was going to look for gold out there, or was I looking for a job? "Because," said he, "if you think of finding gold in that place you will be mistaken."

He then told me he had been on the spot the previous day, and that it was a "duffer," but still there would be a rush, and he would much like to get somebody to ride out with bread every day and sell it at the place. I told him I could not leave my mate like that, but the baker just invited me in to breakfast, and offered me the loan of a horse, and said also that he himself would take bread out as soon as we could be off. "Perhaps," said he, "if my mate did not like the place, as he was sure he would not, I might take a job from him."

I therefore rode out with the baker after breakfast and found my mate, who, as the baker predicted, was in no way enthusiastic about finding anything as good as he had left, and before evening he was satisfied to return to Ravenswood before any one could jump his claim there. As I did not like going back, but wanted the change to ride up

and down with bread, I engaged with the baker for one pound ten shillings per week and board. My duty now was to load a pack-horse every day with bread, and, having another to ride, to take the bread to the "rush" and sell it. The butcher at the "Twenty Mile" also engaged a man to ride up with beef, and we generally rode in company. But it soon proved that it did not pay our employers to keep us on, and after about three weeks' time we both got notice to leave. That brought me to think that as there were many men on the "rush," it might pay me to get my two horses up from Ravenswood, and, buying myself both bread and meat together, sell it on my own account. To that all parties were willing, and as one thing brings another with it, I went to the Chinamen's shop with a view to seeing what profit he would give me on groceries. As "Johnny" strongly advised me to sell a little grog for him, I bethought myself that I had while with the baker learned to make hop-beer and ginger-beer, and found that I could make it for a penny a big glassful and charge a shilling. I resolved, therefore, to take up that industry too. There was nobody at all who had anything for sale at the "rush," and I determined to go out and build a hut and start a general store and shanty. I now went out to the "rush" again, and got two men to help me in the building. The hut I put up was very primitive. Just one room about fourteen by twelve feet, made of saplings, packing-cases, bark, or anything I



could get at all suitable. The roof was bark; the counter was bark also, and at night had to serve for my bed. The door was an artistic piece of rubbish, if I might use that term, but somehow it all hung together and could be locked up. Outside I made a sunshade with tables and chairs under. That was managed by four forked saplings put into the ground, and other straight saplings resting as wall-plates in the forks. Again a row of lighter sticks lay across them and leafy bushes on the top, and the chairs were a lot of logs cross-cut at a height of eighteen inches. The job was completed in three or four days; then I went up to Ravenswood for my horses, and on my return got out a cask to make hop-beer in, some buckets, and a few groceries. I was now my own "boss," and wonderfully proud and happy I was in my little shanty. Besides my own two horses, the butcher and baker each lent me a horse to carry the bread and meat on, and I had quite enough to do—indeed my energy knew no bounds.

Just about the time I started, the Palmer diggings came to the front, and a great rush set in to that place from the south. But as no one seemed to know properly where the Palmer was, and as conflicting and disparaging statements soon arrived from the Palmer, and the wet season was coming on, the north was everywhere swarming with men who were ready to camp and prospect anywhere, just to abide time. As soon, therefore, as I started for myself, numbers of men would arrive

every day, and I had so much to do that I did not know sometimes how to fling myself about quick enough. Long before daylight I was up and got my four horses together. I had a little yard for them. Then, in a racing gallop, I had to tear into the butcher's, baker's, and grocer's, at the "Twenty Mile." My goods would stand ready for me when I came. I would just fling the stuff on the horses, leave my orders for the next day, and be back again in time to sell bread and meat for breakfast! When that was over I had to carry water from the creek to brew a cask of hop-beer, clean up shop, serve people with grog, and feed the horses, make breakfast for myself, chuck out a loafer or two, and other matters, all at the same time. Thus it went on all day. In the afternoon I had sometimes to send a man off with the horses for more rations, and from five o'clock to ten, eleven, twelve, and sometimes all night, there would be a lot of fellows drinking outside the shanty.

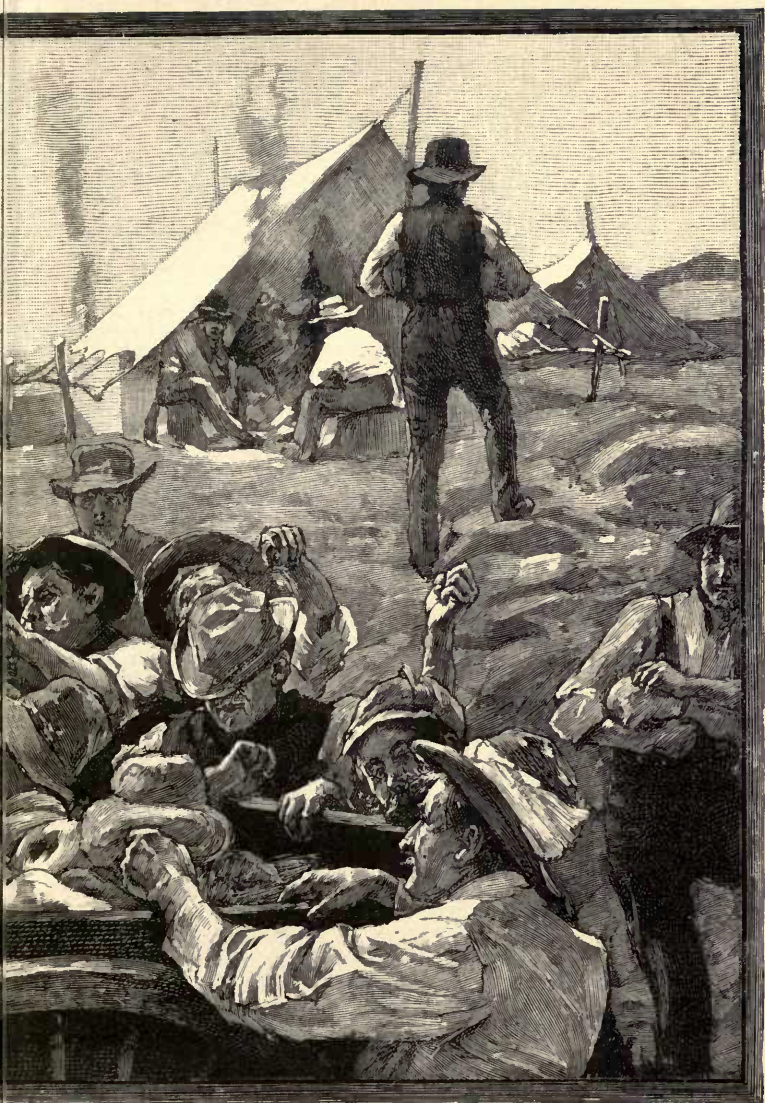
The reader may understand that I quickly gathered in money. Five pounds a day was nothing. But what a life it was! I was never out of my clothes, and I was very seldom dry. Sometimes for weeks together I would be like one hauled out of the sea. That required stimulants, and they were near and handy, nor was it practically possible to be a Good Templar in my position. But all my better instincts were revolted. Still another glass of grog would make me see things in a different light, and somehow it never seemed to











R'S CART.



have any other effect on me than sharpening my wits; indeed, although I know myself to be a temperate man by nature, and but seldom touch spirits, I believe that if I had not then freely indulged in the cup that cheers, I could never have stood the strain on my constitution which this life necessitated. My troubles were many. One was that fellows would get drunk and grow quarrelsome every day; if they were not very big I did not much mind, but if they were too big then I tried all devices to make them laugh and be in good-humour, or I would sometimes even have to keep two retainers in free grog to assist me in the "chucking out" business. I was often knocked about myself. Another trouble or fight with my conscience, which I successfully overcame, was the falsifying the spirits. The storekeeper where I bought it, as well as one good friend after the other, would show me how I could save two-thirds of the rum and still keep it over-proof by mixing it with water and tobacco. So with brandy, all sorts of vile poison and most disgusting stuff was offered me to mix it with. I did not do that, although my advisers thought me very foolish. I mixed my spirit with water of a necessity, but I saw enough to convince me that few shanties or public-houses ever sell pure spirits. But my greatest trouble was what to do with my fast-accumulating money. I did not trust anybody about me. There was no bank nearer than Ravenswood. There was no police, and nowhere



to put it. At last I hit on a plan. Under the big cask in which I made beer I formed a hole in the ground, and at night, when all at last was still, and the cask was empty enough to move on edge, I, having first carefully ascertained that no one was about, would thrust in all I had, and put things around it again so as to prevent suspicion. This mode of banking did not altogether satisfy me; indeed, I was always very anxious about it, but I could think of nothing better. And so the time went on. The bucket which stood under the cask came at last to be nearly full of money, and while on the one hand it was my great consolation, it also caused me more anxiety than all the rest of my work.

One day somebody came and told me that a countryman of mine was in his tent, and was apparently hard up, as he had asked for something to do whereby to earn a bit of rations. The man was, I understood, camped somewhere about. I asked them to show him to me, that I might give him what he wanted and have a talk with him. What was my surprise and joy to find that the stranger proved to be no one less than my long-lost friend and shipmate, the Iclander Thorkill. He seemed to be as glad to meet me as I was to see him, and we exchanged our colonial experiences as far as they had gone. It appeared that Thorkill had not stayed long on the sugar plantation in Mackay, where he had first been engaged. That did not surprise me. His employer, he said, had



offered no opposition to his agreement being cancelled, and with the money he had earned he had bought a ticket for Sydney in one of the steamers. He had thought to get something to do in Sydney more suitable to his ability, but for a long time he failed, and was, through want of money, driven to all sorts of extremities, even to sleeping out at night. Then he at last got a job to drive a milk-cart into Sydney for fifteen shillings a week. He had also tried other things, such as pick and shovel work; had been assistant in a slaughter-yard, and more besides.

"But I do not like it," said he, "people seem so rude."

At last he had scraped enough together to come back to Queensland; he had walked all the way from Townsville, and here he was. "And you are going to look for gold now?" asked I. He scarcely knew; he was so glad and surprised to see me again that he could think of nothing else. "Well, Thorkill," said I, "do you remember you said once that you and I would never part? Let us now renew that agreement. Last time it was, perhaps, my fault we parted, but this time it shall be yours; and to show you I am in earnest I will ask you, without further formality, to consider yourself a part proprietor of this hotel and all there is in it."

"Oh! what do you mean?" cried he. "You must be making a great deal of money here and I have none; nor do I understand your work."

"Never mind," said I, "we are partners if you

like; you do not know how badly I am off for some one I can trust. Think of my being all alone here; I cannot do it much longer."

But say what I would Thorkill would never hear of it, and so I in a sort of way engaged him to do what he could for me. He carried water and swept the floor, but the only time he tried to drive the horses to the "Twenty Mile" he lost them both! He had his tent not far from the shanty, but we had seldom time to speak. His heart was not in my work, and I often, nay always, when I saw him, felt an uneasy sort of conscience.

One Saturday night, or perhaps more correctly Sunday morning, when a lot of men were drinking outside my hut under the sunshade, and when I myself had imbibed more than was good for me, I began, against all the rules of common prudence, to boast of my money. The party appeared as if they did not believe me, on which I got excited, and called them all into the hut. There I asked them to look under the cask while I tilted it over. What a sight! A bucket was buried in the ground nearly filled with silver, gold, and notes! How much there was I did not know myself, but there was more than I liked to say for fear of being doubted. Now began a drinking bout such as had never been before. Everybody had to stand drinks all round. At last they went away, but my recollections thereof are not clear; I only know that I slept on the counter, and that some one was shaking me and grumbling in very unparliamen-

tary language over my not having been away after bread and beef. I sat up and looked around. It was about the time I ought to be back from the Twenty Mile. The door was open, and nearly a score of men were coming along for bread and meat. Now I remembered all about the previous night. My first thought was my money. I went and peeped under the cask. The bucket was gone!

I gave the cask a push that capsized it. "Thieves and robbers, who has stolen my money? Speak!" There was lying a pair of hobbles on the counter, and as one of the party began to laugh, I struck him with it. This was the signal for a fearful orgie. The whole crowd flung themselves forward and struck, kicked, and tore me until I fainted right away. When I came to again they did not leave me alone. The whole shop was sacked from end to end, and in their drunken frenzy they pulled it down! In the midst of it all came Thorkill, and putting me on his back carried me off into his tent. There I lay while he bathed my wounds and consoled me as well as he could, assuring me it might have been all for the best.

The next day the butcher and the baker came out and took their horses away. They wanted me to start again, and both of them offered me money and credit, but I was so disgusted with myself and the whole business that I told them I would not be a shanty-keeper again for all the gold in Queensland.

Thus was it with me. To lie in Thorkill's tent and listen to his quiet, peaceful way of talking—how different was that from the noisy, drunken orgies of which I had for about five months been a daily witness! I took a violent dislike to the very place, but where to go I did not know. I felt as if I only wanted to get away from everybody but Thorkill. I did not care where I went. As for him, he thought he would like to go south again. This place and these people were too much for him. He had now learned to write pretty well in grammatical English, and he thought he might get something to do in Brisbane. As for me I had never seen a place yet where I could not get something to do; so far as that went I did not care, but I thought of him that he came straight from Sydney, where he had not been successful. He had such a mild, pedantic air about him, which no doubt would look well in an antiquary, but which would scarcely prove a recommendation for a grocer's clerk, or, indeed, for any other position for which I could think him eligible. So I said to him one day, as we were again talking about going away, "I am sick and tired of looking at anybody but yourself. What do you say if we go prospecting for twelve months? I have got thirty pounds in Townsville bank, and thirty pounds in Ravenswood, besides a few pounds here. You have got twelve pounds you earned while with me. Then we have the horses, and you have got the tent. It is sufficient for a twelvemonth's trip.



I am now a pretty good bushman, and if we only get to where there is gold I think we shall find it. If we don't I do not care. What do you say?"

This proposal met at once with Thorkill's approval, and we both went into Ravenswood, where I drew out my money. Here we loaded up the horses with as many rations as they could carry, also pick, shovel, basin, and other necessary things. Then we went back the same way we had come, until we arrived at Condamine Creek, twenty-five miles out. From there we ran up the creek, as near as I can guess about forty miles, prospecting all the time. Then we turned northward, up another creek, and knocked about so that it would be difficult to describe where we went. But we did not care. I was as happy as a bird, and so was Thorkill. We had our guns with us, and we could every day shoot as many birds as we could eat, and kangaroos besides. Sometimes we would camp, and Thorkill would fish while I prospected about. When it rained we would lie in the tent and talk about Denmark and Iceland. That was a theme on which Thorkill never could be tired, and he had such a fund of genuine information on that subject that I was never tired of listening to him.

We had been out prospecting in this way for about three months, and were now in the vicinity of Cape gold-field, when we struck a place where we thought there was payable gold. We had for several days been following on, through a very mountainous country, a river, the name of which

we did not know, until we reached the place of which I now write, where it ran through a valley, hemmed in on all sides by big mountains. The river was still of considerable volume. Here we found a nugget of gold about an ounce in weight the first time we tried, and although our good luck did not repeat itself, yet we decided, as it was such a beautiful spot, that we would camp for a month or two there, so at least to give the place a fair trial. We pitched our tent, therefore, on a little knoll not far from the creek, and made ourselves comfortable. The next fortnight we washed for gold from morning to night, and each made about an ounce per week. We considered this very satisfactory, and were talking often about what name we should call this new field when we could not conceal it any longer and a "rush" should set in; because we knew very well that if we, as strangers, by and by rode into the Cape, or any other place, to buy some rations, and there try to get our bit of gold changed, that we should be tracked back to where we had got it, unless we were far more clever than I gave myself credit for being. But neither of us minded that. We were, on the contrary, quite proud of having to figure as successful explorers, and it used to be one of our recreations of an evening to sit and talk about what name to give the place. Thorkill was of opinion that we ought to find a name which should remind all who came here of both Denmark and Iceland, but as it did not seem possible for us to



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invent such a name, at last I accepted Thorkill's suggestion to call it Thingvallavatu, that being the name of a large lake and river in Iceland not far from his home, and as it seemed a well-sounding name, I thought it suitable; and although I do not know if ever a white man has been there before or since that time, yet as often as I think of the place I remember the name we gave the river—Thingvallavatu.

On one evening that is for ever engraven on my memory, we were lying in our tent—Thorkill and I. It had been raining heavily all day, and we had not been able to be about. We felt pretty miserable, our usual stock of conversation seemed to be exhausted, but far out in the evening it revived again, so much indeed that Thorkill began to tell me of things of which he had never spoken before. He told me of his parents, of his brother and his sister, and explained to me where their farm in Iceland was, giving me the address, describing the road leading to it, and every detail, until I said to him that if we were lucky enough now to get a bit of gold we would both go home to Iceland and settle down there. From that conversation drifted to other things, and was at last almost at a standstill, when he called me by name, and, in a bashful sort of way, observed, "I say, were you ever in love?"

This was a theme on which we had never enlarged: partly because there had not been much opportunity yet for either of us in Queensland to indulge in such a luxury, and partly because I do

not know, to the best of my recollection, that it had ever been mentioned between us, so, as I recognized that he wanted to tell me something, I said, a little surprised, "Why do you ask?"

"I have," said he. "While I was overseer on that farm in Alo, I knew a girl. Oh, how good she was, and how beautiful! I sometimes would go and visit her in the evening. She was only a servant girl, and her father was working there too. One evening I kissed her."

"I am afraid," said I, "you have not forgotten her yet."

"No; her I can never forget."

"Why did you not marry her?" said I. "I suppose as you went visiting her, she would have had no objection?"

"How could I?" replied he. "If only I had been an ordinary working man I would willingly have asked her; but I was not that. Her father always spoke to me as if I owned a mansion, and yet I had scarcely sufficient salary to pay for my own clothes. No, I never asked her."

"Does she know you are out here?" inquired I.

"No, neither she nor my parents, nor anybody; they must think I am dead."

I had nothing to say. I was lying thinking about matters of my own. A little after this I thought I heard him crying. Was it possible? I did not like the idea. I listened again. Yes! there was no mistake. Thorkill was really crying. Deep, big, stifled sobs. I asked what was the

matter. Two or three times I asked before he answered. At last he said, "I could not help it; I cried because I know very well I shall never see Reikjavik" (the only town in Iceland) "again."

After that I kept talking for some time to him in a sort of overbearing way about that, saying we need not cry, surely, about that, if that was our only trouble; that we had money enough to get home now, and if we had not, what then? As for myself, if I set my mind on going home, rather than cry over it I would stow away on a ship or work my passage. But I got no answer from Thorkill. I could not sleep, and soon after the day broke. The rain had by this time ceased, and as I saw that Thorkill had now fallen asleep, I thought it a pity to waken him, and crept as quietly as I could out of the tent to make a fire and get a drop of tea for breakfast. As I sat by the fire an hour after, eating my breakfast, I saw Thorkill coming, creeping on his hands and feet out of the tent, with his head screwed round, looking up in the air over the tent. I somehow thought he was looking at a bird, and wondered he had not got the gun, so I sat still and said nothing, but kept watching him. When he was a long way out of the tent he got up, and, still looking up in the air, pointed fixedly at something and cried, "See! oh, look there!" I stole behind him and looked, but could see nothing, so I asked, "What is it?"

"Oh, don't you see? See! a large Russian emigrant ship flying through the air."

“Are you going altogether insane?” cried I, beating him on the back. The next moment with a deep groan he fell right into my arms. I asked him what was the matter. Was he sick? Was he bitten by a snake? I do not know half I asked him, but all the reply I got as I laid him in his bunk again, was, “Go for a minister.”

My mate was dying, and I knew it now. Dear reader, whoever you may be, if you have seen your nearest friend die, then you know how bitter it is. But if you at such time have been among others who have shared your grief, and had a doctor to take the responsibility off your hands, then you may only guess at what *I* felt when I saw Thorkill lying there perfectly unconscious. We had as it were for a long time been everything to each other, and the disappointments and mishaps we both, so far, had suffered in Queensland, had, it seemed at that moment, made him simply indispensable to my existence. How could I go for a parson? I jumped out of the tent and ran round it three or four times before I recollected that I did not know of any human habitation within fifty miles! Then I went in again and spoke to him. There was no answer; not a movement in his body. He lay as if in a heavy sleep, a high colour in his face. One of his arms was hanging out over the bunk, and would not rest where I put it, so I took a saddle and placed that underneath it, and as it was not yet high enough, I put a pint pot on that again. There I balanced it, and there it remained. I had



not much medicine, only some quinine. That was no good. Then I thought he must have been taken by an apoplectic fit. I took the scissors and cut off all his hair and beard. Then I went outside and worked desperately at making a sunshade over the tent, because the sun was beating down on us so fiercely; next in again, and out. I did not know what to do. I could not for a moment remain still. Sometimes I carried water from the creek and bathed his head with it. Then I feared I was only tormenting him, and knocked it off again. As I sat looking at him in the afternoon I could not avoid thinking about how he had in his last hour of good health made such a complete confession about matters he always before had been so reticent about. Why? I ask the question now. Can any one answer it. It is *not* fashionable in our age to believe more than can be rationally explained, but I believe most people in their lives have had similar strange experiences. If I make the remark that I am superstitious, then I know I shall lay myself open to ridicule, and yet it is only a form of admitting that I do not know all that passes in heaven and on earth.

In the afternoon, as Thorkill still lay in the same immovable trance, I thought I must find out whether he was conscious of my being there or not, so I knelt down and spoke in his ear, and called him by name. "Thorkill," cried I, "if you *can* hear me and know that I am here, try to give me some sign." Then

as I watched him I thought he breathed extra deep, but I was never certain. Anyhow, although I had myself no Bible, and never had used one before, I got his out of his swag and began reading at the commencement and kept on until it was too dark to read any more. During the night the rain and storm began again. I could hear in Thorkill's altered breathing that the end was near, but I had no other light but a match I struck occasionally, and it seemed to frighten me when I struck one and saw his altered face. At last I knew he was dead, and in an agony of sorrow and excitement I began praying to Balder, our ancient god of all that was noble and good, to come and fetch his own. I was fearfully agitated, and remember well how I walked outside the tent singing the old "Bjarkamsal," and almost fancying I saw all the ancient gods coming through the air. It is a common saying of a person who has died, that he was too good to live, but if ever that saying was true of any one, it was true of Thorkill. A pure descendant from the ancient Vikings, yet how different was he from his forefathers. And all Icelanders are more or less the same. Honest, frank, and kind, he could not understand why everybody else was not also honest and good, and I know very well he declined the contest of life; he could not match his simple faith with the cunning and brutality of the ordinary set of people one meets with when the pocket is empty. Better, perhaps, he should have died then and there. Why was I sorry? Why

did I not rejoice? Who knew but that I some day might not die in great deal more lonely and in much more friendless way than he? He had lost nothing, and it was I who was the loser; but for his sake I would be glad. In this strain of mind I passed the remainder of the night, but when at last daylight came it brought with it the grim reality of death such as it is, and life such as it is, and also a sense of what was now the only favour I could show the remains of my friend. It was three or four o'clock that afternoon before I had managed, as decently as I could, to bury the body, and then all my energy was expended. Yet as I sat resting myself for a moment, I was aware that I must be off somewhere before evening, far from that spot. I had a splitting headache; my legs seemed unable to carry me. Yet I must be off to get the horses. I found them, but when I came home with them it was evening and I had to let them go again. I could do no more, and not altogether with an uncomfortable feeling was it that I that evening laid myself down in Thorkill's bunk, thinking that perhaps after all we need not part. I was sick now myself, and fancied I saw fearful visions all night. The next morning I could scarcely raise myself to a sitting posture, but during the day I managed with the instinct of self-preservation to carry some water up from the creek and to bake a damper. My recollections for some time after this are very indistinct. It may have been a week or it may have been two weeks.

All that I remember of that time are glimpses of myself sitting by Thorkill's grave, singing, or playing the flute. The first clear recollection of that time which I have, was one afternoon when I was lying in the bunk watching, in a lazy sort of way, some rats nibbling at the flour-bag, which had somehow fallen down from its place. The flour lay scattered about the tent, and everything seemed in glorious disorder. I lay a long time looking at the rats, and wondering where Thorkill was—whether he was making breakfast, for I felt very hungry. I had no remembrance whatever of his being dead. I called him; my voice seemed curious and weak. I grabbed a poker to strike at the rats with it—how heavy it felt! Then I got up and went outside, and stood staring for a long time at the grave before I recollected that he was dead, and that I myself was or had been sick. Everything outside the tent bore evidence of having been thrown about as if by a maniac, and I felt a thrill of horror running through me as I thought of myself, how perhaps I had walked about here at night alone, sick and delirious. I felt quite myself, however, although very weak. I was hungry, and felt that I must have something to eat, get it where I could. I staggered about looking for food. Not a vestige of tea could I find; there was no meat except a few nasty bones which I found in the billy, and had to throw away; then I discovered a little sugar, and I scraped together some flour. My next trouble was that I



had no fire and no dry matches. It took me all my time to get a fire, by rubbing a hard and soft stick together, but at last I succeeded, and then made a johnny-cake in the fire. Out of sugar I made my supper, and sat by the fire dreaming and living it all over again. With the help of my gun I got some birds the next day, and stewed them in the billy with flour and figweed. I also found the horses all right, but I was too weak to think of shifting my quarters just then, much as I would have liked to do so, because there seemed to me to be a sort of haunted air about the whole place. I busied myself all day, when I was not hunting for food, with repairing my clothes, but I had a great longing to see somebody of my own species again, and to sit there every day talking to or thinking about a dead man had something sickly in it that I did not like. I could not for a couple of days find either my money or the bit of gold we had got. Whatever I had done with it was to me a complete blank. I found it all at last in this way : that somehow my hat did not seem to fit me, and when I looked it over, there was all the money stuck under the lining, but I never had any recollection of putting it there.

I read all Thorkill's letters and took them with me when I left. They were from his parents and his sister, addressed to him while he was in Denmark, telling him of all sorts of small home-news, and hoping soon to see him again. These he had been carrying with him everywhere, and I had

often seen him reading them. There were also photographs of all his family, and I made them all up into a small parcel intending some day soon to write to his people.

I confess I never did write. I could not bring myself to do it. I thought of what he had said—that they must think him dead. Why, then, reopen their wound? Let him remain “a missing friend.” As I had no settled abode for a long time after this, I carried his papers with me everywhere for many years. One photograph, of his sister, a very handsome girl, I had until after I was married, and treasured it greatly. I think Mrs. — must know what became of it at last.

*CHAPTER IX.*  
*GOING TO THE PALMER.*





## CHAPTER IX.

### GOING TO THE PALMER.

WHEN I left Thorkill's grave I made a course as near as I could for the Cape gold-field. This place I found almost deserted, as most of the diggers had left for the Palmer. The few people who remained there had seemingly nothing else to speak about but the fabulous richness of that field, and they were all deploring each his untoward circumstances which kept him from going thither. And so it came to pass that, while gradually recovering my spirits, I made up my mind to go to the Palmer too. But to go to the Palmer was at that time easier said than done. The Palmer gold-fields lay somewhere in a totally unexplored country, and none had been known to reach the Palmer from the Cape after the commencement of the wet season. Many unsuccessful attempts had been made, and the returned parties spoke loudly of the "impossibilities" on the road, such as swollen rivers, swamps, marshes, mountains, blacks, and what not besides; and what seemed to me the worst, no supplies of any kind were to be found on the fields. One had simply to carry with

him rations sufficient to last until he returned. Add to this that a pint pot full of flour cost half-a-crown on the Cape, with other things at a proportionate rate, and it made me decide another way.

A new port had been opened on the coast by the shipping companies as the most feasible spot from which to reach the Palmer. The name of this place was Cooktown on the Endeavour River; and the spot is identical with a place mentioned in Captain Cook's travels, where he ran his ship, the *Endeavour*, ashore to carry out some necessary repairs to that vessel. To get to Cooktown from the Cape I should first have to go to Townsville and thence take ship to Cooktown. Although the distance from the Cape to Townsville was as great as from the Cape to the Palmer, yet, as it was possible to travel the one road and not the other, I decided to go there, and from that port take ship to Cooktown, whence after having obtained supplies, I would try to reach the Palmer.

I will not tire the reader by describing my journey to Townsville. My horses were well rested and in good mettle, and I let them trot out every day, so that I reached the coast very quickly. I found Townsville crowded with people who wanted to go to the Palmer. The steamers could not take them fast enough, and in trying to secure a passage for myself and my horses I was disappointed time after time. Money, however, was flying about all over the place. I was offered work

in several quarters—in fact I was nearly implored to take it up for fifteen shillings a day, or there was piecework, by which I could easily have earned double that amount, but, of course, I could not think of it. At last I obtained a passage in a schooner which had been fitted up for the voyage. There was accommodation below decks for forty horses, and fully that number were hoisted on board. On the deck was accommodation for as many passengers as could find standing room, and I think there must have been over a hundred people altogether. Indeed, we were so crowded that, if the skipper had a right to complain of anything, it certainly could not be that he had not a full cargo. I paid five pounds apiece for the passage of the horses and two pounds ten shillings for myself. We had to find our own forage, too, for the horses, and also to provide our own food. Water, however, the skipper had to find himself—no light matter on so small a ship. We were supposed to make the run in forty-eight hours, and carried water enough for double that time. I had corn and hay to last my horses for a fortnight, but some of the others had scarcely any fodder. At last we started, and when the little steamer which hauled us out of the creek had cast us off, it was proved to my entire satisfaction that my run of bad luck was not yet at an end. A strong wind was blowing, but although the ship was tearing through the water at a terrible rate, yet we did not make real way, as the wind was straight against

us. It may seem strange that we should start with such an adverse wind, but once the horses were on board the skipper had to go. The first evening we were out the captain and mate fought and nearly knocked each other into the sea. I mention this, however, only because I remember it; I don't think our troublesome journey was due to neglect or bad seamanship, but the wind was against us, and kept so day after day until at last it blew a perfect hurricane. The horses, of course, suffered very much. At one time they would stand nearly on their heads, at another, the other way, now on one side, then on the other, as the ship was jerking up and down. I was working down below with my two horses all the time, trying to ease them all I could. I tied my tent clothes and blankets round about the stalls to lessen the force of the knocks a little for them. All the horses, however, did not fare so well as that, for their masters themselves were, for the most part, lying in a helpless condition up on deck, and the air below was so foul that it took a good pair of lungs to endure it. The horses soon began to die off, too; and to haul the poor dead brutes up and throw them overboard took us all our time, seeing that very few of us were capable of such work. Upon deck it was indeed a sight. Some were completely gone with sea-sickness and had tied themselves to the bulwarks, others were lying "yarning" and laughing as if nothing were the matter. Many of these men



must have known that even if the ship could weather the storm, yet with the death of their horses all hope of a successful journey was at an end for them. Yet one heard no complaint; and I should like here to pay this compliment to Britishers: that, whether English, Scotch, or Irish, they are, as a rule, brave men. Ours was not a momentary suffering either. It was a constant drenching with the waves, day after day. The horses, our most valuable property, hauled overboard as fast sometimes as we could get them up, and our own lives in constant danger! Yet no one complained. They would "yarn," laugh, or crack jokes all day long. The only exceptions to this rule, I am sorry to say, although I hope they were not typical, were two Danes who had come on board. One of them had informed me as soon as we left Townsville that he intended to run away from his wife who lived there. Now, when the storm was blowing, he became intensely religious and declared it to be a punishment from Heaven for his wickedness and he made me most sacred promises, one after the other, that he would return to her bosom if only God would spare him this time. The other declared the ship to be a regular pirate craft and Queensland an accursed country. I had to cook for them both, hand them their food, and cheer up their spirits all the way. One day we spied a large steamer flying the flag of distress. She came from the south too, and was, like ourselves, trying to reach Cooktown. As she

came labouring through the waves we saw that it was the *Lord Ashley*. The deck was black with people and I do not know how many hundred horses. This heavy deck-cargo caused the ship to rock so that it looked as if it were about capsizing every time it lurched over. Two of her masts were already overboard, and as our schooner ran past her we saw the people engaged in throwing the horses overboard alive. Nearly all the horses were sacrificed in this manner. To see the poor brutes try to swim after the steamer or the schooner was heartrending. We on the schooner could give no assistance; indeed, after all, the steamer was better off than ourselves, inasmuch that it kept on its way while the schooner had to tear up and down and to do its best not to be blown south again. When we at last reached Cooktown, some days after, the *Lord Ashley* was lying there; but it was her last journey. She was so knocked about that, to the best of my belief, she was sold as lumber afterwards. All our water was now used up, and we had either to try to effect a landing or go south again. As the mate declared he knew a place on the coast just where we were, where there was a fresh-water creek, it was decided to call for volunteers among the passengers to man the boat and get some water. As I had two horses on board and was not sea-sick, I declared myself ready to make one. There were six oars to be manned. The other five volunteers, although passengers, were yet old sailors. The mate was

to take the helm. Before the boat was lowered great care was taken to lash the empty casks in their proper position and to have everything in order. Then the captain took the wheel and ran the schooner in towards the land further than customary when we tacked. As we turned the boat was lowered. The men and I jumped down. Off flew the ship: it seemed miles before I realized that it was gone. And we in the boat—talk about the big swing at home in Tivoli; that was only child's play to the rocking we now had! My hat blew off and flew towards Townsville; my hair, and even my shirt, were trying hard to follow! One could scarcely get the oars in the water. But, in spite of all, we paddled as best we could, and shortly after were inside a little harbour, where the water was comparatively smooth and where we effected a landing. How peaceful and quiet it all seemed here under the mountain. I felt, as I trod the firm soil under my feet, that I should never make a good sailor, and it was a terror to me how we were ever to reach the schooner again. We rolled the casks up to the little creek and filled them. The mate said he had been there some years before when he was with a New Guinea expedition. As we were roaming about, waiting for the right moment to get out again, we found a lot of wreckage, old rotten spars, a cabin door, &c. Then we came on the skeleton of a man, not all together, but scattered about. There were also remains of some old clothes, and we found a purse with silver in it,

something less than a pound. The mate declared this money to be an infallible charm, and suggested that we should each take a piece and say nothing about it. There were only six pieces of money, and we were seven to share it. No one would stand out for any consideration, so we drew lots. I secured a two-shilling piece, and, whether for good or for bad luck, I have it yet, and used to carry it for years in the most approved fashion round my neck. We had no tools with us, so we could not bury the bones. There they lie, perhaps even yet, the remains of another "missing friend." We came on board the schooner again somehow. Opinions differed much amongst us as to why we had not been drowned, and no verdict was arrived at. The mate said it was the charms we carried which had done it, others said that God held His hand over us, but the one who had no charm said it was because we were the very refuse of the devil. I express no opinion myself, only that it was certainly surprising. As the storm gradually veered round a little we reached Cooktown. Out of the forty horses only sixteen were alive; one of mine was dead, and the other did not look as if it could live long after I got it out of the ship, yet it gradually came round and proved a very good horse afterwards.

Cooktown is now reckoned among the old-established towns of Queensland, but when I landed there it looked wild enough. To describe it I ask the reader to think of a fair in the Old Country,



leaving out the monkeys and merry-go-rounds. There were some thousands of people all camped out in tents. Those who intended to start business in Cooktown had pegged out plots of ground in the main street and run up large tents or corrugated iron structures in which all sorts of merchandise was sold cheap enough. But the wet season kept on, and there was no communication with the Palmer. People left town to go there every day in the rain and slush, but many returned saying it was no use trying, as the rivers could not be crossed. There was at that time a very mixed lot of people in Cooktown. All the loafers, pickpockets, and card-sharpers seemed to have trooped in from Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne, looking for the gold in other people's pockets, and the robbing of tents was an everyday occurrence. Then, although it had been made known far and wide that any one who wanted to go to the Palmer must either starve or carry six months' rations with him, still many destitute and good-for-nothing people could also be seen wherever one looked: these form a class of men as easily distinguished from the *bonâ fide* miners as if they belonged altogether to another species. No work of any kind was going on for more than one-tenth of the people who looked for employment, and any one who wanted a man might easily get him for his "tucker." I believe one could have got them to work all day for their dinner alone. Men would walk about among the tents in droves, and

wherever they saw rations there they would beg. While this was the true state of affairs in Cooktown just then, I remember well standing outside the newspaper office, reading the paper, the leading article in which described in glowing terms the bustle and activity going on in this rising city, and declared that any man who could lift a hammer was welcome to a pound sterling a day! Of course I did not look for any work, so I did not care. There was also a great deal of sickness, especially dysentery, and the doctors required cash down before they would even look at any one. If one took a stroll up among the tents, it was a common, indeed an inevitable, sight to see men lying helpless, writhing with pain on the ground; some of them bellowing out for pity or mercy. Very little pity or help, as a rule, did they get. Men would pass such a poor object with the greatest apathy, or at most go up to him and give good advice, such as that he ought to be ashamed of lying there and ought to try and crawl into the tent again! Such was life in Cooktown during the first "rush" there to any Queensland gold-fields.

I had not at that time got much money. If my second horse had lived, I should have been, as I thought, all right; but as horses worth six or seven pounds could not be bought under thirty or forty pounds, I could not buy another to replace the one I had lost, and had therefore to be content with one. So one day I loaded up my horse with rations

and went on the road. As I was going to the Palmer, where money was of no value whatever, and as everything depended on my being able to carry a sufficiency of provisions, I had bought the best of everything regardless of cost. I had cocoa, extract of beef to make soup of, preserved meat and such like in large quantity. Then I had tea, sugar, and one hundred and fifty pounds of flour. My wardrobe, on the other hand, was not extensive. It consisted of one shirt, over and above that I wore. Fifty pounds of my flour with the tent, half a blanket, billy-can, pint pot, knife, gun, &c., I carried on my own back; the remainder, including spade and basin, I strapped on the back of the horse. I had then only a few shillings left of all my money when I started, but going through the town on my road out the burden on my back began already to feel heavy. I therefore thought it wise to carry no unnecessary loads, and seeing some fellows standing in the street who looked as if they needed some refreshment, I called them together and had a big "shout" in a public-house as far as the money would go. That relieved my mind and my pocket!

The road, if it might be called one, was really a track or belt of morass, some ten chains wide, in which one had to wade at times up to the knees. I was prepared to endure great hardships; but to understand the suffering to man and horse in dragging oneself along that road one must have tried it

for himself. Twice that day the horse and I got bogged. To get clear again I had first to crawl on my hands and knees with part of my own load up to some fallen log and deposit it there, then back to the horse for more. When the horse was quite unloaded, I had to take it round the neck and let it use me as a sort of purchase by which to work itself out. Then load it again and wade along. I made eight miles that day, and I knew that no one who left Cooktown with me came so far. At the eighth mile there was a large camp of diggers, who said they could get no further nor yet back to Cooktown. I should have remained there ; but as I saw next morning some prepare to get a little further, I started with them, and soon left them behind too. That day and the next the road was better although still very bad. I crossed a river the third evening I was out. It was as much as I could do to get over, and, as in the night it began to pour with rain, I concluded, what really proved to be the case, that the creek would rise and so effectually cut off my retreat. The next day the road was worse than ever. The horse got bogged time after time, and I was myself on the eve of being knocked up. The whole road so far, almost ever since I had left Cooktown, was strewn with clothes, boots, saddles, rations, in such quantities that there would have been enough to have opened a good store with if one could have got it all together. I had also passed at least a score of dead horses, sticking in the mud with the



saddles, and, in some cases, rations on them; and I met scores of men, who, having thrown everything away, were struggling to reach Cooktown again on foot. But with dogged obstinacy I kept on trying to accomplish the impossible. At last the poor horse got bogged again worse than ever. I could not get him out. He looked so pitifully at me! I am sure it knew the predicament we were both in. I struggled and tried hard to get it out, but I could not. As it settled deeper and deeper into the quagmire I thought I might as well finish his sufferings and my own. So I put my gun to his ear and shot him.

There I stood in the pouring rain alongside the dead horse, full of anger with myself that I had not, by using more judgment, saved myself and my poor, faithful companion from such a hard fate. I am not poetically gifted, and do not understand the science of making much out of a little, so I cannot say how miserable I felt. Yet it is nevertheless true that I was ready to burst with grief. I was wet through, and had been so all day, nor had I anything dry to put on. Evening was coming on too. Up and down the "road" there was nothing but a quagmire, into which I sank to the knees whenever I moved. Here also lay my hopes of redeeming my fortunes. I know very well if I were placed in the same position now, I should not have strength either of body or mind to extricate myself. As it was, when I think of it now, after so many years, I can truly aver that I

mourned for the horse more than for myself. I had met no travellers that day on account of the rain, but I knew I was about eight miles from the Normanby River, on both sides of which large bodies of miners were camped—those on my side being desirous of reaching the Palmer, and the camp on the other side being full of men who had come from the Palmer and wanted to go to Cooktown. But both parties were prevented from getting further as the Normanby River was in full flood and half a mile across.

I could not continue to stand looking at the dead horse. I felt a great longing to reach the other men that I might, by talking to them, forget a part of my own trouble in thinking of theirs, so I managed that evening, and with even a part of my goods, to reach the camp, and the next few days I devoted to fetching the remainder of my stores from where the dead horse was lying.

On the banks of the Normanby River there was at that time a sight which might well furnish food for reflection. I doubt if fiction could invent anything more strange. Several hundred men were camped on the south side of the river waiting for the flood to subside so that they might get over. We had rations in any quantity, but, speaking for myself, I can truthfully say, if the others were like me, we had no money. On the other side of the river was an equally large camp. The men there were the diggers who, when the first news of the Palmer broke out, had, before the wet season set

in, gathered to the "rush" from the Etheridge, Gilbert, Charters Towers, Cape, and other outlying places, and who, having eaten their rations and gathered their gold, were now trying to get to Cooktown to purchase supplies. A perfect famine was raging over there. The country around is very poorly off for game; besides, they had no powder, and so they had been eating their horses, their dogs, and at last their boots! It is a fact that they used to boil their blucher boots for twenty-four hours and eat them with weeds! It takes something to make a Queensland miner lie down to die, yet it was the general opinion among men who had been to all the Victorian and New Zealand "rushes," that they had never suffered such hardship before or seen country so void of game or life of any sort.

There we were, looking across at one another—they shaking their gold-purses at us, and we showing them the flour-bags. Two came across to us. The way they managed was this: first they took off the rag or two which yet served them for clothes and strapped them on to the horse, then getting on the horse and forcing it into the water it would soon be borne with the current down the stream; they would then slip off, and getting hold of the tail with one hand swim with the other. They both managed to cross, but it looked so desperate an undertaking that the others did not venture. The two men who came over brought the first reliable news from the Palmer for a long

time, and were besieged with questions. As I do not care to return to the matter again, I will say here that among the tales of suffering on the Palmer by the first batch of diggers, was that of one of my shipmates from home, who had arrived there from the Etheridge, and who, while looking for gold in one of the tributaries to the Palmer, had been cut off from the main camp by the river rising so that he could not cross to get away. His dead body was found in his tent after the wet season. He had died of hunger, yet under his head was a bag with eighteen pounds' weight of gold in it. Poor fellow ! the last time I saw him was in Port Denison, the first year I was in the country ; he had then earned five pounds sterling, and had come into town to get it sent home to his father and mother.

On our side of the river we passed the time as best we could. There was a large band of German musicians, and I joined them with my flute, which I always carried. It really seemed strange, in the heart of the wilderness, where a few months before no white man had ever put his foot, to hear the tones of Strauss or Offenbach. As a general thing, though, men would sit in their tents while the rain came pouring down in sheets of water. At night we suffered very much from mosquitoes, and in the daytime from flies, the common little house-fly, which was a perfect nuisance all day. Dear reader, I know you expect of me that the least I can do for you who have followed



my fortunes so far is to tell you now how I somehow proceeded to the Palmer, and there in a month or two accumulated at least twenty thousand ounces of gold, with which I returned and got married to some nobleman's daughter. I should not be sorry to write this if I only had the gold somewhere handy; but as you no doubt would, after all, prefer the truth, whatever it is, I must confess that I could not at all see my way to go on any further. When the weather settled and people began to cross the river I had a good look at the poor emaciated fellows who came across, some of them with very little gold, and all of them more or less broken in health. Then I began to ask myself whether the game was worth the candle. The Germans who constituted the band offered to take me as mate in their party, and to put my rations on their horses; and for that I was greatly obliged to them, but I seemed all at once to have taken such a dislike to roaming about, and was picturing to myself the comfort I could have had and the sum of money I might have saved by constant employment at my trade, that I refused their kind offer, and instead of going on towards the Palmer I sold my rations for a good price and returned to Cooktown.



*CHAPTER X.*

*RETURNING FROM THE PALMER.*





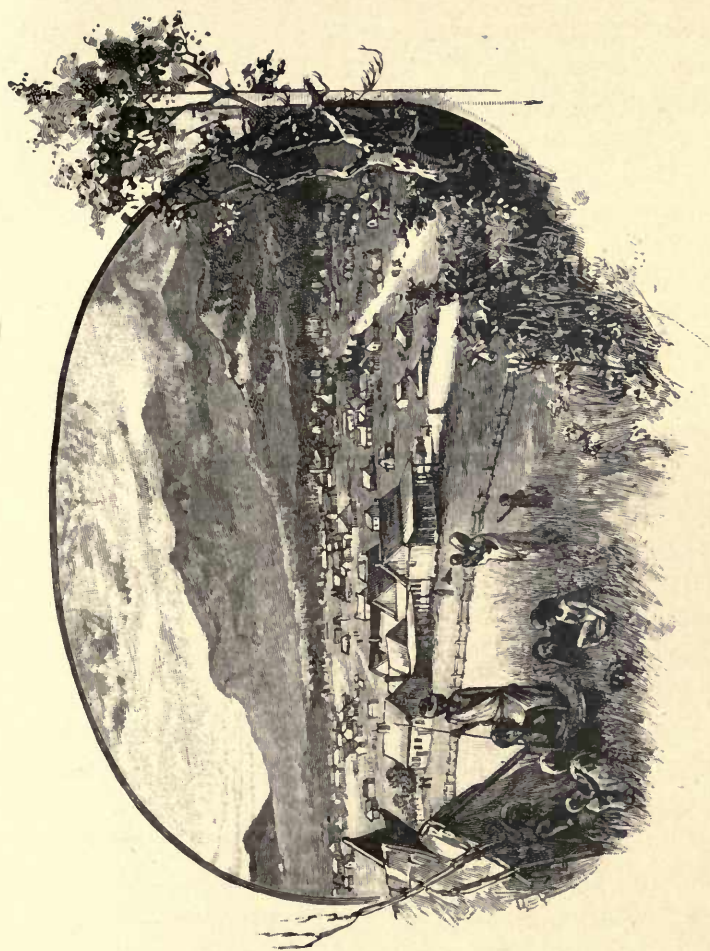


## CHAPTER X.

### RETURNING FROM THE PALMER.

I SAT in my tent one day in Cooktown, while the rain was pouring down outside, when my attention was attracted by four men who stood in a desolate sort of way in the road. They seemed to me to have such a pitiful, aimless, vacant way about them as they stood there while the rain ran down their backs in bucketsful! But I do not suppose that I for that reason alone should have given them a second thought, because misery and want were such common sights in Cooktown. What, however, riveted my interest in them was that I could see they were Danes by their clothes, and also that they had only been a very short time in Queensland. So I thought I would have a lark with them at my own expense if, as I guessed, it should prove true that they could not speak English. I therefore called to them in English, and invited them to come into my tent out of the rain. They came quickly enough. My point was to let them think me an Englishman and to prove the old

proverb that he "who hears himself spoken of seldom hears praise." So I questioned them from what country they came, how long they had been in Cooktown, where they were going, how long they had been in Queensland, and all such matters. It appeared then that they had arrived in Rockhampton a few months before, had taken a contract there to burn off a piece of scrub, by which they had saved a few pounds, and having heard of the *Palmer*, had bought tickets for Cooktown in the *Lord Ashley*, that steamer we met in the storm. All their swags had been washed overboard, and since they arrived in Cooktown they had not only spent their money long ago, but had since been unsuccessful in all they undertook. They subsisted on scraps and odd pickings among the tents—but they did not mind so much now that they had got used to it! They liked Rockhampton and the job of scrub-burning, "that being a lively game," but Cooktown they did not like; anyhow, as soon as they could get a job and save enough to buy some rations, they would go to the *Palmer*. What agrieved them most was that they had a Danish five-dollar note (worth about ten shillings), but they could not get it changed because the Englishmen said it was a false one. This they told me in a sort of English a great deal more broken than my own, but yet they had not the slightest suspicion about my not being myself a thoroughbred Britisher. Indeed, the conversation was full of interjections in Danish from the one to the



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other, such as : " I wonder if the beggar is going to give us some grub when he has done questioning ? " or, " He has got nothing himself to eat ; let us get out of this ; " or, " Wait a minute, I will ask him for some flour. " When I had carried my game as far as I cared, we had some tea and a real good meal, after which, as it began to get dark, I invited them all to stay in my tent until I left Cooktown, because I was only waiting for a steamer. In the night, as we all lay as close as we could in the little tent, I had the satisfaction of lying listening half the night to their praise of myself, as they were talking in Danish, thinking I did not understand. They seemed to have a terrible grudge against some Dane in Cooktown whom I did not know, but to whom it appeared they had applied in vain for assistance ; and now they compared me as an Englishman to their own countryman, and came to the conclusion that strangers were always the best. I did not like to undeceive them, and I never did ; but it was so very pleasant to lie and listen to one's own praise, and I really felt quite benevolent over it, so I thought I would do what I could to deserve their praises.

I had decided that I would go back to Port Denison and ask my old employer there for a job, which I never doubted he would give me. It seemed to me it was the place where I had been treated best as yet in Queensland, and although we had some differences of opinions, yet I was

quite longing to see him and his family again, and also my old shipmate and his wife. I had no doubt, somehow, he was there still. It seemed to me almost like going home, to see them all again, and as I was in the tent lying listening to the Danes, I thought that I would get my nice old room once more as soon as I came to Port Denison and have everything provided for me, and that I could therefore spare this tent, and the gun, the billy-can, pint pot, &c. When I left Cooktown I gave all these articles to my countrymen there, and, as I was going in the boat, even offered to exchange their "false" Danish five-dollar note. I had finally only half-a-crown left.

I have written about this, not because I wish the reader to know how benevolent I was, but to make it clear how it was that I parted with these things. It will be perceived, as my history proceeds, how sorely I was afterwards in need of them myself.

It was early morning when I was put ashore in Port Denison in a boat, because I was the only passenger for that port. I had been away about four years, and as the memory of my first landing in this place forced itself upon me I felt that I had not made very good use of my time so far. Yet as I went along I consoled myself with the reflection that even if my pocket was empty, still I was more like a man than I had ever been before, and if I was not rich, no one could say he was poor on my account.

I walked along the jetty and up the street before I met any one; then I saw a man I remembered as one to whom I had spoken several times formerly. I rushed up to him, laughing and smiling, and shook him by the hand. He seemed surprised and looked cold upon me. At last he remembered me. "Oh, yes! How are you? Come by a steamer? Nice morning."

How many have never known the bitter disappointment of being repulsed in this manner? I sneaked away, and began to ask myself if it was possible that my old "boss," or, perhaps, even my shipmate and his wife, would greet me in the same manner. I had only half-a-crown left in my pocket. My wardrobe was also in a sad condition; yet I was clean, and had, while on the ship, polished my boots and scented my handkerchief, so who should say that I was not the successful digger? Still, I felt very shaky about meeting a new disappointment, and walked about for an hour or two, not caring to present myself at Mr. ——'s place, and not being able to find out where my countryman lived. I was soon reassured, however, for presently I saw the "boss" himself, out for a morning walk, and he seemed both glad and surprised to see me. After we had given the public debt a lift in a public-house just opened, he made a few inquiries about how far I had succeeded in making my fortune, and offered me there and then a job, although he said he was by no means busy. My shipmate was with him yet, and had

two pounds ten shillings per week, and he would give me the same, he said, in the hope that work might soon be more plentiful. When we separated I went to look for my countryman, who also was glad to see me, and at once insisted on my staying at his house for the present. How well off he seemed to be! It was his own house, and he had made a nice lot of furniture himself for the rooms. He had also a fine garden, where, as he said to me, he took his recreation in working it up. But, best of all, he had a kind, good wife, who also had been my shipmate, and two little boys. When he came home of an evening the wife came with his slippers and his smoking-cap, and there he was, while I, who had gone through more hardships these four years than many people do in their whole life, had seemingly done no good either to myself or to others. I had, of course, told them at once that I intended to go to work in the old place again; and it was my intention at the first favourable moment which offered to ask my friend for a few pounds to renew my wardrobe a little, but so far I had said nothing whatever to anybody about my circumstances. In the evening, as we sat talking on the verandah, my countryman quite suddenly asked me if I was short of money, as he was prepared to let me have some if I wanted it. It seems a strange contradiction to my previous confession, but nevertheless it is true, that he had scarcely spoken before I blurted out that I was not at all short of money, and that it was a great



mistake on his part to think so, that I had quite enough to serve my purpose at any time, and more to the same effect.

"Well, then," said my mate, "I am glad for your sake; but as that is the case I will tell you what I otherwise would have said nothing about. The 'boss' was to-day passing one or two jokes about your being so anxious to make your fortune quickly when you left here last, and as we have scarcely a stroke to do, I would not, if I were you, give him the satisfaction to begin work again, because I am sure he thinks you are very hard up."

"Does he?" cried I. "Well, he makes a mistake, and so do you. Perhaps you think because I haven't a paper collar on that I am ready to beg?"

"Oh, no, no!" cried he; "I only meant, in a friendly way, to offer you what you perhaps needed, so do not get angry where no offence is meant."

"Oh, I was not angry," said I; "but I certainly would not work for Mr. ——— again, as he thought I could not do without him. Had I not for a fact passed Townsville, where wages were higher and work more plentiful, to come here? And now he thought he was the only man in Queensland where I could earn my living! But I would show Mr. ——— different. I would go to Port Mackay, where there was plenty of work and no family arrangement about it. That was what I would do." After some more conversation of the same sort, I went out in the street for a walk, and to get an opportunity of thinking quietly over my now des-

perate circumstances. With the exception of the clothes I wore upon me,

“ All my fortune was a shirt  
That was ragged and full of dirt.”

I walked about the streets for some time, trying to make a song in honour of the occasion, which was to begin with the above words, and set it to music, and as I succeeded better than I thought I correspondingly got into high spirits, and took it all as an immense joke. There seemed to me only one way out of the difficulty. I could walk to Port Mackay, which is another and larger town, more prosperous than Port Denison. It lies on the coast also, and the distance by road between the two places is one hundred and thirty miles. The road, however, is very little frequented, as what little communication there is is all by water. There were, however, half a dozen stations on the road, and I made no doubt I should be right somehow. The blacks in that district had, indeed, a bad name for spearing cattle and being very wild and ferocious; but of that I took no heed. The most important thing just then was for me to get away from my countryman's house without exciting in him any suspicions about the state of my exchequer. I felt some strokes of conscience certainly over thus repaying his kindness with such insincerity, but I could at least truthfully say that I had not meant it, and that circumstances over which I had no control, &c. So the next morning

I put on a reserved, dignified air, and after breakfast told my host that I intended to shift my quarters. They both kindly protested, until I had to say that I had business somewhere in the bush, and would come back to their house as soon as I came to Port Denison again, but that I had to go now, and might not be back for some time. Then Mrs. — pressed me to take some sandwiches with me for dinner, for which I was not sorry, and then I started for Port Mackay. The first station on the road was thirty miles out. That place I meant to reach before evening. The sandwiches went down like apple-pie long before dinner-time, and a little before evening I gained the station. I was even at that time so much of a “new chum” that I took it for granted that a traveller would be made welcome anywhere in the bush whenever he might call. In the gold-fields where I had been people were ashamed of refusing hospitality—at least, I had not seen it done. This was the furthest south I had yet been in Queensland, and as I stood by the creek that evening and looked over to the neat little homestead lying there so isolated, it seemed to me quite a beautiful place, and I congratulated myself that I had reached it just before I got tired and in good time for supper. I had a bath in the creek and straightened myself up all I could before I went up to the house. It was getting nearly dark as I came up the track leading into the garden. I heard some one crack a whip close behind me, and saw a man on horse-

back coming along with nearly a dozen big dogs, who now barked in angry rage all round me. I stood there a complete prisoner while the man on horseback looked daggers at me. I suppose he had been out after cattle and had not found those he looked for ; anyhow, he did not appear in a good humour. "Where are you going ?" asked he.

"I thought I might have a bit of supper and a camp here to-night," said I.

"Supper and camp!" cried he. "Why the —— don't you camp in the bush ? Ain't you got no rations, neither ?"

"No," said I. "I should be obliged to you if you would sell me something to eat."

"Would you not be obliged to me if I would show you a public-house ?" cried he.

I was too innocent to see his jeer, only I perceived that he did not want me, so I said, "Public-house ? yes, I should be glad ;" and added, "I did not know there was any ; how far is it ?"

"Oh, not far," said he, and he moved on, and at last called his dogs off me.

I was in a rage as I moved on, but just past the house the road branched off, and I thought it necessary to find out which to take, so I sang out to him, "Which is the Mackay road ?"

"The *right* one," cried he. And along the *right*-hand track I went mile after mile, but no hotel was there. At last I found it was only a cattle track, and that I had come out to a big creek,



where it branched off everywhere. The moon was just going down, and it was far out in the night when I laid myself down to sleep. It was raining heavily by this time, so that I could light no fire, but, tired and worn out as I was, I slept as well as if I had lain on a feather bed.

When I woke up again it was daylight, and I felt quite stiff in all my joints and so cold that I could scarcely move. Three or four native dogs were circling round me, but retired to a more respectful distance when I sat up. These native dogs are, I believe, peculiar to Australia. Miserable, cowardly curs they are. They will often follow a man for days when he is lost until he drops, but I do not believe it has ever been recorded that they have actually attacked a man before death has made him oblivious to all. Not so, however, with the crow. The crow is found all over Australia in the most out-of-the-way places, and many a brave man has had his eyes picked out before he has had time to die! These birds seem to have a sort of instinct to know when any one is in distress. If a man is lost and the "trackers" are out after him, they know that he is not far off when they see a lot of crows hovering over a particular spot. He may not be dead, but he is certainly dying.

Although I was wet, stiff, and cold, and without any food, yet I was worth twenty dead men yet. I saw that the only thing I could do was to retrace my steps to the station the same way as I had

come ; so along the road I went, and that in a very bad humour, most of all because I could see no other remedy than to beg assistance where I had been already so badly treated. When I could get on the right track there were thirty miles to the next station. I had only half-a-crown. What could I do if nobody would help me ? At last, at two or three o'clock in the afternoon, I came back to the place I had started from the evening before, when I had been shown the wrong track. As soon as I saw the house again I felt neither hungry nor tired. I only felt as if I could walk for ever without rest or food. I would ask for nothing. I would take nothing. I would just go on. But still I had to find out which was the Mackay road. Yes, I would go up to the house to ask that question. As I came up to the place I saw a young woman standing outside the back door washing clothes, and about a dozen blacks were squatted about the ground in all sorts of lazy positions. I noticed especially a very tall young gin, who stood leaning against the wall, with a long spear in her hand. I asked the girl which was the Mackay road, and she, looking round rather surprised at me, said, "There—that one to the left." She did not look at all vicious, and seemed disposed to enter into conversation, but, true to my determination, I turned on my heel to go again. I had scarcely turned, however, before I heard her sing out in an excited voice to the blacks, "Don't ! Drop that spear ! Look out !" Turning round once more, I saw the tall gin with the spear, hold-

ing it high above her head, ready to hurl it at me. I never spoke, because, to tell the truth, I never realized that she intended to kill me. I looked her full in the face, and, as I felt pretty indignant at the time, my look disarmed her. Anyhow she quailed before my eyes and dropped the spear, and I went my way.

The blacks were at that time very bad in that district, spearing cattle, &c., and as I was going along the road I accounted to myself for their presence on the station in this way—that perhaps the squatter thought it cheaper to feed them than to allow them to rob him. That they were not very quiet blacks I felt sure, and the more I thought of the gin and her uplifted spear the more anxious I became. They might, thought I, set out after me yet and finish me off. Moreover, as I had thirty miles to walk before I could hope for any food, I made up my mind to stagger on as long as my feet could carry me. But I did not go so fast as the day before. Slowly and painfully did I drag along. The road was simply a track on which a horse might come along, and a sort of coarse grass eight or nine feet high grew on both sides. How fervently I wished I might meet another traveller—anybody had been welcome—but no one seemed to have been along there for ages. On I went. Every half mile or so I would come to a running brook crossing the road. I became too fatigued to take off my boots and socks every time, and this made my feet sore; but still I



staggered on. It was now evening, or, rather, late at night, but just as the moon was going down I came to a creek which seemed larger than the rest, inasmuch that I could not in the darkness look across, and taking a couple of steps into the water I went in nearly to the middle; still it grew deeper. I therefore concluded that as necessity knows no law, I must camp and wait for daylight before I attempted crossing. A large tree was growing close to the water and on the track. Down by the roots of that tree I threw my swag, and laid myself upon it without undressing and without a fire. My matches were all wet, and I was too tired to walk one unnecessary step.

I was lying there looking up at the stars, feeling so unspeakably tired, when, after a while, just as I was going to sleep, I heard a noise not far from me for which I could not account, but it brought me to speculate upon the probability that there were alligators in the water, and that it was scarcely prudent to lie there as I did, with my feet almost in the stream. So I got up and went back some twenty yards or so, on the rising ground, where there had been an old camp years before. There I lay myself down again with a big stick in my hand. I had just gone off to sleep when I started up again in terror. A peculiar indescribable noise was coming from down the creek, where I had been before. What it might be I did not know. Never had I heard the like before; it was a noise sufficient, as they say, to raise the dead.



The water seemed agitated as if an army of blacks were coming across, the bushes and grass were cracking as if a stampede of cattle was taking place, and through all these noises ran a piercing continuous yell such as no human being or animal I knew in nature could utter. The thought ran through me as I started to my feet: either it is the blacks who have come to kill you, or it is an alligator on the same errand. In any case, thought I, my only chance was to show fight. With that I grabbed my stick, and sang out, to gammon the blacks, "Here! hie! Bill! Jack! Jimmy! Here they are. Get the guns; we will have a shot at them!"

While I screamed at the top of my voice like this, I struck the long grass with my stick, and, to frighten the alligator, if any were there, ran right down to where I had been before, yelling all the while. The noise kept on in front of me, but died away with some splashes in the water, just as I came down. When I stopped screaming all was silent. I stared around me, but the darkness was perfectly impenetrable.

Was there an alligator now crouching at my feet ready to swallow me in a couple of mouthfuls? Or was I surrounded by a mob of savages, perhaps, lurking alongside of me, and seeing my helplessness? Or was it evil spirits? I did not know what it was, or where it had gone, and yet the hair seemed to rise on my head. Do not talk to me about bravery or cowardice! I believe most men

are capable of screwing their courage up to the necessary point at any time, providing they know what is before and behind them, but if I knew where there was a man who would not have felt fear if placed in the same position as I stood in there, then I would fall down and bow before him. I crept back to where I had been lying when I heard the alarm and lay down again, and so exhausted was I that I fell asleep at once, and did not wake up before the sun was shining in my face. My first thought, of course, was the noise in the night, and I went down to the creek to look for tracks or signs of some sort. There, close by the tree, on the very spot where I first had laid myself down, was the half of a large kangaroo. It seemed bitten off right under the forelegs, all the rest was gone. On the road and in the soft mud by the water were the tracks of an immense alligator, and where it had come out and gone into the creek again a deep furrow as from a sulky plough had been made by its tail. I had never yet been so near death! It seemed plain to me that the first noise I had heard which induced me to get up and go further away from the water must have been the alligator stealing upon me, and that the unfortunate kangaroo afterwards unwittingly saved my life. But as there is scarcely anything that cannot be turned to good account, so I also tried to turn this accident to my advantage, because I took up my knife and cut some steaks out of the kangaroo, which I had to eat raw, as I could make no fire, for

I could not find any of the wood with which I had learned by rubbing two sticks together to make it. It was with fear and trembling that I crossed the deep creek. The water went up over my armpits; but it had to be done, and once on the other side I made a speech to the alligator, thanked him for my breakfast, and wished him, "Good-morning."

I walked all day, but so slowly and painfully that I did not go very far. One of my boots was chafing my foot so that I had to take it off, but after having carried it some miles I threw it away. In the evening I came to an empty hut and a stockyard, but as no one was living there I concluded it was put up for the purpose of mustering cattle. It was locked up, so I lay down outside and seemed to find some company in looking at the house. The next day was Sunday. I felt when I got up that I could not walk much further. Fortunately, perhaps, I got some encouragement from thinking myself near the station, as fences and cattle began to appear. Yet it took me from break of day to afternoon before I came out on a large plain, and there at once I saw the house lying in front of me, but yet about a mile distant. It seemed a large and "fashionable" house for the bush. As I came a little nearer I could see people under the verandah, and as I came still nearer I made out three ladies and a gentleman sitting there. They seemed to have a telescope, which they passed from one to the other, and whoever had it pointed it straight at me. Ah! what a disgrace, thought



I. I would not mind so much, but I felt revolted at the idea of standing as a beggarman before young ladies. If I could have run away I am sure I should have done so, but I was altogether too weak. Still, I seemed to straighten myself up somehow under their eyes, and I threw the long, ugly stick I carried away, and went on with as sure a step as I could command up to the verandah and saluted the company.

I remember well the following scene. The gentleman, a portly, elderly man, had one of those bluff-looking, high-coloured faces which, even while they try to look cross, cannot hide their evident good nature. He was now smiling in a benevolent sort of way upon me. The elderly lady who sat by his side also looked very kind, while two young ladies, who also were in the verandah, regarded me with a mixture of dignity, curiosity, and pity. When the gentleman began to speak he looked very cross.

"Coming from the Palmer?" inquired he.

"Yes, sir."

"Hah! did I not tell you so? Did you find any gold there?"

"No, sir."

"Didn't I say so?"

These aside remarks were addressed to the elderly lady, who silently acquiesced; and then she turned towards me and inquired, with a sort of anxiety, "Did you happen to meet a young man up there by name Symes? David—David Symes, that was his name."



I was very sorry that I had not met him.

"How do you think he should know him?" cried the gentleman, in a great rage. "Ah!" he exclaimed, "that will teach you fellows not to run gallivanting about the country again in a hurry, I'll swear. All your bit of money clean gone?"

"No, sir." (I had my half-crown.)

"Then you want nothing from me, I suppose?"

"Indeed, sir, I do, very much."

"Ah! I thought so. I knew it jolly well, I did."

"Father," cried the lady, "why do you keep tormenting the poor man so? You go and sit there under the sunshade, and I will tell the girl to bring you some dinner. Poor man! walked all the way from Palmer."

I went and seated myself by a large table which stood in the yard, and as soon as I sat down I fell asleep; then I would start up again, and fall asleep again, and every time I opened my eyes I saw them all sitting on the verandah watching me. The servant-girl brought a large supply of roast beef and potatoes, also a plum-pudding, but I could eat nothing. When I had tried a couple of mouthfuls the squatter came down to me and said he would show me a bed where I could lie down. "And when you have had a good sleep," said he, "then I will find you a job of some kind, if you want it."

I slept for nearly twenty-four hours, and when I had fully recovered, which took me three or four days, I had a job at ring-barking trees for the

squatter for ten shillings per week. That was all he offered me and I did not care to ask for more—indeed, I was very well pleased. When I had been there two or three weeks, and I thought we were about quits, I asked for my wander-book again—in other words, I explained that I was a carpenter and expected to earn better money if I could get to Mackay. I am glad to say that he would have liked to keep me, and he offered me a job as stockman for a pound sterling a week, but still that did not suit me at all, so I went my way again with a few rations in my bag and twenty shillings in my pocket. I will not ask the reader to follow me step by step on this memorable journey. No doubt it will quite plainly appear that I have gone through a terrible lot of hardships in my time, but although I admit I should not care to have to do it again, yet it is a fact that, when I think of myself at that time, I seemed in no way crestfallen. On the contrary, I was always in the best of humours, and never doubted for one moment that good fortune would come again. It has always been a fact in my case that when I, as on this journey, have had very scanty food for some time, my voice becomes much better and clearer. So that as I came along the road, or in the night when I was camped, I would enjoy myself by singing as well as if I had been a performer at a concert. Alas! many matters which unfortunately would not interest me much now, had at that time great attraction for my mind—a bird, a wallaby

scudding across the road, a strange plant, all such things would set my imagination going. It is only as we grow older and get more sense that such trivialities cease to amuse!

The next place on this journey where anything worth relating occurred was at a sugar plantation about sixteen miles from Mackay. I arrived there at eight or nine o'clock one night, but as I came past the place, some men who were camped in a tent by the road good-naturedly offered me a drink of tea, and when I had drank it and was just ready to start again one of the men, who had been away for half an hour, came back and said that I had to go up to the kitchen, where there was a countrywoman of mine who wanted to see me. I was in no way caring for a lady's company at the time, so I asked him to make my excuses to this countrywoman of mine and to say that I was gone; but all the men began chaffing me, and were nearly going into fits of laughter about her good looks, wishing they were me, that such a girl was not to be seen every day, &c., so at last I unwillingly went up to the kitchen. I never thought to see anybody more than some uninteresting sort of country girl, and I only intended to ask her, as shortly as possible, what she wanted, and then go on again. In a word, I was in rather a bad humour. The door was opened for me by a very lady-like girl, and I was quite doubtful at first whether it was the lady of the house or only the servant. All at once I seemed to remember how



torn my clothes were, and my poor appearance, and felt as if I did not like to go in; but the girl seemed bent on patronizing me.

"Come in," cried she, in Danish; "be not afraid. If Danes meet in this country I think it is the least they can do to speak to one another. I know it right enough there is many a brave fellow in this country suffering hardships such as they do not dream of at home. Come in, come in!"

I did not know at first whether to feel angry or not over this speech, but—she was so pretty, and she meant well, and she *was* my countrywoman after all, so I took her by the hand and thanked her for her sympathy, admitting that I was rather down on my luck just then, but that I had great hopes that things would soon take a turn for the better. Then she offered me a cup of tea, and by and by we were chatting away like old friends. It was now about ten o'clock, and I thought it high time to take my leave, when we heard some one approach the kitchen from the house. The girl seemed to get quite terrified. "Oh," she whispered, "that is Mr. —— himself. He has forbidden any of the men to come to the kitchen; he is sure to be angry."

The gentleman came in, and while he was staring in a sort of haughty and surprised way at me the girl was sitting bending over her sewing as if she had committed a crime. I did not like the prospect of being turned out very much, and I felt also sorry for having brought unpleasantness upon



her; but, after all, the want or possession of a little tact will alter matters wonderfully even at such a moment as this, so, more for the girl's sake than for my own, I saluted him in my politest manner and begged his pardon for having come into the kitchen. I said I had been travelling past, intending to walk to Mackay, but that the men on the place had told me that a countrywoman of mine was here, and that I had not been able to resist the temptation to call in the hope that it might be some one I knew. I hoped he would excuse me.

"Oh yes," said he, "that is all right; I am sure Sophy will be glad to see a friend of hers. Have you given your countryman some supper? Don't let him go away hungry. Surely you are not going to walk to Mackay to-night? There is a place over there where you might sleep: you will show him, Sophy. Good-night."

What a relief we both seemed to find at the turn things had taken! Quite a grand supper was now put before me, a white damask table-cloth was spread, silver coffee-pot and cream-jug and all sorts of delicacies appeared. When all was ready, we both sat down to the cheese, and when at last I went to seek my bed we both candidly admitted to each other that this had been a red-letter day and one never to be forgotten. I slept and dreamed, and when I woke up again I could distinctly remember what I had dreamed; and that dream I have never forgotten since. I dreamed

that I saw a snake which crept on the floor, and this snake seemed to me of wonderful beauty, but I was not at all afraid of it—on the contrary, I wanted to take it so that I might keep it; for that purpose I bent towards it, but as I did so the snake seemed to rise on end until it was nearly as tall as I, and while I stretched my arm out to take it, it hissed, and when I touched it, then it bit me. I now perceived it was no longer a snake, but that young woman who had entertained me in the evening. I woke up at once, and grasped the whole dream in my mind. Then I thought it must surely be a warning. I fancy I see the sceptic smile who reads this. I should like my readers to believe in the truth of my assertions; and to those who are disposed to so believe me, I will say they may, for nothing is truer. I was lying the remainder of the night thinking of my dream and congratulating myself that there was no cause for me to feel uneasy, as I should be going away in the morning, and probably should never see that girl again. But when morning came the sun dispelled my fears, and I was soon sitting chatting with Sophy while I had breakfast. I felt wonderfully sorry that I should now have to go, never to see her again. It was, however, ordained otherwise. By the time I had the swag on my shoulder she had been into her mistress, and, without my knowing or asking it—for indeed I only wanted to get to Mackay—had interceded for me, asking that I should be offered work. Mr. —, therefore,

came out to me and said he had been told that I was a carpenter, and that he had a lot of carpenter's work he wanted done. He had no time to go into details then, but he would be obliged to me if I would glue together for him a case of chairs he had, and then he would speak to me again the next day. How could I refuse? I got out the case of chairs and stood all day gluing them together, outside the kitchen, but I could not help thinking of my dream every now and again, and I realized that there was great danger, and that if I engaged myself for one week it would be impossible for me to either tear myself away or for any one else to trust me. In the evening I sat by the fire in the kitchen, with my elbow on my knee and my head in my hand and was in a bad humour, although the girl was sitting chatting more sweetly than ever by my side. To talk about a week before I tore myself away! was it not too late already? If I had to stay here, thought I, until I could not tear myself away, then I must be weak indeed. It must never be. I will go at once—this moment. I got up and said I was going to Mackay as soon as I could get time to roll my swag together.

She looked at me as if she thought I was mad. Then she asked me if she had offended me, and insisted on telling Mr. —— I was going, so that he might pay me for my day's work; but I would not risk the effect of any pressing invitation to stay, and groped my way in the darkness down to



the road and away. Never have I felt more poor and miserable and lonely in my own eyes, as I went along, than I did that stormy, bitterly cold night. As soon as the imaginary danger was over I pictured to myself in rosy colours how things might have turned out if I had only remained. And all this I had made impossible for the sake of a miserable dream which most people would have forgotten before they were properly awake. Oh, yes, I deserved surely as much bad luck as fate could heap upon me! But now it was too late. "Too late!" I kept repeating, and then I would make plans for going away to the end of the world, as soon as I should have sufficient money to pay my way. I could not in the darkness cross the Pioneer River, which runs twelve miles from town, and as I had plenty of time I sat on the bank of the river all night, wishing an alligator might take me, indulging in romantic sentiments; but the next morning, as I was nearing Mackay, hope sat on her throne again as I passed by the one beautiful plantation after the other and saw enough work going forward on all sides to convince me that I should get plenty to do for myself, and possibly some day, perhaps, myself own one of these plantations.



*CHAPTER XI.*  
*A LOVE STORY.*



## CHAPTER XI.

### A LOVE STORY.

I OBTAINED work at one of the plantations for three pounds sterling per week. For this money I was expected only to work eight hours a day and five hours on Saturdays, that being the ordinary tradesman's hours of work all over Australia. But as my employer was busy and I was tired of remaining poor longer than I could help, I obtained leave to work two hours overtime every day, for which I was paid at the rate of eighteenpence an hour. When I arrived in Mackay I had gone into a Chinaman's boarding-house, as being the most suitable place for my means and condition, but although a similar place had suited me well enough in the gold-diggings, the class of men who stayed here and the accommodation I received did not now suit me at all. I seemed to shrink into myself and gradually got into a morbid and unhealthy state of mind. I was as good, at least I thought myself as good, as most of the clerks or well-dressed young fellows I saw knocking about the town, doing very little work; but that they were of a different opinion was



evident from the scathing contempt one or two of them managed once or twice to put into their manner towards me the first week I was in town when I by accident had addressed them. Do clothes make the man? thought I; was it necessary for me to conform to their habits, and to imitate them, to secure respect or even civility? I would not do it. What would be gained? All was vanity. Another little incident which had not been without its influence upon me, I mention to show that such unconsidered trifles make the sum total of ordinary life, was this: the day I arrived in town, but when I was yet about half a mile from it, I had met four young ladies, who I suppose were out for a walk. They were evidently dressed in their best clothes and looked both nice and pretty, and as youth always recognizes a sort of relation in youth—or, if you prefer it, young men always take an interest in young women, and *vice versâ*—I was looking closely at them and they at me as we neared each other on the road. They took no trouble in concealing their verdict of me. I will not say they were so ill-bred as to make grimaces at me, but they might just as soon have gathered their skirts about them and held their noses. I saw that they considered me an undesirable party. I was just then in rather high spirits, which could not be damped all in a moment, so as I met and passed them I took my stick up and held it in military fashion close to my shoulder as I marched by. I could hear them giggling behind



me, but I did not look round, and lovelorn as I was—because you must remember my adventure of the day before—it had a depressing effect upon me, which grew as time went. So, after staying for a week in the Chinaman's boarding-house, with the first money I got I bought a tent and pitched it right away in a lonely spot, and there I lived by myself, like a regular hermit. I thought of Thorkill who was dead and of his lonely grave, that dream for which I could not account, and I thought, too, of my own home from which I had heard nothing now for years, and I brooded over my own friendless condition. Then I thought of the girl on the plantation I had left behind me, but it never entered my head for a moment to go and visit her. Far from it. I would travel to the end of the world to put it out of my power rather than do that, or for two pins I would then have put an end to myself! It seems to me as I write, that, this being simply true, it should not be without a salutary warning to other young men not to allow themselves to drift into the same state of temperament, because it is dangerous and may spoil a life which otherwise might become useful; nor is there any merit in such misanthropy, as the subsequent pages will show, and but one little straw one way or the other will have its effect during the remainder of one's life.

One thing which it is difficult to write about, as it seems to have no logic or sense in it, but which, nevertheless, was of great importance to

me, was this : I worked like a tiger, not because I was fond of work nor to get away from my morbid feelings, because I did not struggle against them, nor because I was fond of money, as I had very little use for any, as I thought, and as my wages were the same whether I worked like an average man or did more, but I worked because in my morbid brain I liked to fancy that the girl on the plantation was in great distress, and that her life and liberty depended upon my doing certain work in a certain time. When I got a piece of work to do I would think to myself in this way : here is a week's work for any man, but unless I can do it in four days, then—all sorts of misery will happen. Therefore I really worked as if my life depended on it, and I would be perfectly intolerant of any obstruction to my progress. My "boss" took in the situation very soon, because he let me stand by myself and dared scarcely speak to me for fear of putting me out.

This state of affairs had lasted about three months, and during that time I can almost count on my fingers the words I had said; I do not think I had spoken to any one one unnecessary word. It cost me only five or six shillings a week to live. I had bought merely the most necessary clothes, and all the rest of my money and cheques I had received were in my possession, lying in a pickle-bottle in the tent.

One afternoon as I came from my work I saw in front of me in the street the girl from the

plantation. I ran after her. "Sophy, Sophy, is that you?" Happy meeting! She had been in town for a month and was now a dressmaker; but let it be enough to say that I went at once to the tent and got out the money and bought the best clothes I could get in town, that I went to stay at an hotel, and that, as time went on, I kept two horses in a paddock, ordered a side-saddle, and for sixteen months after used to boast to myself that no one among the tradesmen in Mackay had a prettier sweetheart, was a better dancer, kept such good horses, or earned so much money as myself!

I reckon this time as being among my most pleasant recollections. People did not seem to me so egotistic or the world so black as it had appeared while I lived in the tent; on the contrary, I was often invited among very nice people to their parties and family gatherings, and I was a constant attendant at both Oddfellows' and Caledonian balls, and, in short, anything that was going on. I was intending some day in the near future to marry and settle down, and for that reason had bought an allotment for twenty-five pounds, and I meant to build a house on it. I had only one fault to find with the lady who honoured me with her approbation. It was this: she was fearfully jealous and excitable, and would at such times be in a perfect rage if I had done anything which she thought not becoming; but as I took it as a proof of the value in which she held me, I rather liked it, and even sometimes went so far as to excite her

suspicion on purpose just to get up a "scene." This happened again one day when I had been sixteen months in Mackay. The occasion was that I had, as it was Sunday, been out for a ride with another young lady—I had things so handy, the two horses, one with side-saddle and all, and the temptation to a little extra flirtation was always great—but when that evening, in a most dutiful mood, I went to see my "only love," she, I remember, was very angry indeed with me. She was sitting sewing in her room, and I was sitting also at the table in a careless position, with my head on my hand and my elbow on the table, smiling at her and enjoying matters very much, although, as I have written above, she was very angry, and even crying. She rated me terribly, too, for my wickedness, and I was defending myself mildly. "Dear," I said, "I only took her out to-day as a mark of the respect in which I hold her."

"I'll mark you!" she cried, and she struck me in the mouth with terrible violence. The blow not only knocked me off the chair, but sent one of my front teeth spinning round the room, and to this day I am marked by the absence of that tooth. I got up; she stood gasping with excitement, looking at me. I cannot give the reader any idea how handsome she was, or how fond I was of her. Still, this would never do. I took the lamp from the table and began looking for my tooth on the floor. I never spoke, neither did she say any-



thing. I can well remember. When I had found the tooth I took my hat up and went away. This would never do, thought I, I must be off somewhere by the next steamer, never to return; because I knew very well that if I stayed in Mackay I should just go and make love to her again. I therefore decided I would be off, never mind where I went; and in that mood I arrived at my hotel. On the verandah stood one of the boarders who was the captain of a labour schooner. For the information of my readers who may not know what that means I will state that the plantations round Mackay and elsewhere in Queensland employ a great many South Sea Islanders, and that these men are brought to Queensland under a certain system. It is this way: a number of planters unite in sending a ship out among the South Sea Islands to engage all the Kanakas the ship can hold, and who are willing to come. The ship so engaged is under Government orders, and the Government sends an agent with the ship, whose duty is to watch that no coercion is employed in order to get "the boys" to engage, and that they understand their agreements with the planter. These agreements are all uniform. The Kanakas engage for three years' service, for which the planter gives them their food and six pounds per year; he also defrays the cost of bringing them to Queensland, and when their time is out he sends them at his own cost back to the island whence they came. As I now came up on the verandah

the captain spoke to me and invited me in to have a drink with him. He had been staying in the hotel for about a month and I knew him very well, so we went into the bar and began to talk about his affairs. He intended to start for the South Seas the following night, if all went well; the only thing that upset him just then was that his cook had deserted the ship and was not to be found. He did not care except for this reason—that he could not afford to keep the ship waiting, and on the other hand he did not know where to get another, as he could not do without a good cook. “Faith, then,” said I, “I am a good cook, as cooks go in this part of the world, and, what is more to the purpose, not only do I intend to leave Mackay to-morrow if I can, but I have a great longing to see the South Sea Islands, and therefore I am your man, if you like.”

He could not see that at all for a long time, and thought I was having a lark with him, but when at last I said there was a lady at the bottom of it, he winked and thought he knew all about it. So at break of day the next morning we went on board the schooner, and I started in the cook’s galley making breakfast for all hands. I peeled potatoes and flogged the steak as if I had never done anything else in my life, because the captain would not engage me before I had shown my capabilities; but after my trial he was quite satisfied and engaged me for the trip at eight pounds per month, and then I stipulated before signing:

articles that I should have leave of absence until break of day next morning, as it was necessary for me to put my affairs in order before I left Mackay. After having given my word of honour to return, I went ashore again. There was enough for me to see to. My "boss" did not owe me anything, as I had received my last cheque on the previous Saturday; but there were my tools to dispose of. These went for a trifle among the other men: one took one piece, one another, and the "boss" gave me his cheque for the lot. Then there were the horses and saddles; these also were got rid of before dinner-time, and when evening came I had sold my allotment which I had bought for twenty-five pounds, for one hundred and fifty pounds, and had all the money lodged in the bank. I had not, therefore, done so badly in Mackay the eighteen or nineteen months I had been there. Not only, on an average, had I enjoyed myself pretty well, but the sum total which I now had to my credit was as near two hundred and fifty pounds as possible. After tea I had nothing to do but reflect on the wisdom or otherwise of the step I had taken. I walked about the streets for a long time, and as I knew very well that my sweetheart expected me as usual I found myself circling round the house in which she lived. She did not, of course, know that I was going away, and as she usually expected me about seven o'clock of an evening, my feet seemed perforce to carry me towards the house. I did not go in; at eight

o'clock I saw her sitting by the window, at nine o'clock she was there still, at ten o'clock I saw her sitting by the window as I came past the place, at eleven o'clock she was standing outside, and I was right up to her before I saw her. The reader must not expect too much confidence from me ; I cannot repeat what she said, and will only say this—that I have never seen her since, and that with a heavy heart I went on board the schooner next morning, when we hoisted anchor and left for the South Sea Islands.

Dear reader, if I were to tell you all that happened to me on this journey in the same detailed way as I have told you about my travels through Queensland, it would take me too far away and also occupy too much space, so I have thought it better to leave it all out and take up the thread of my history at the point when I again arrived in Port Mackay about nine months after. Should this effort of mine meet with the approbation of the public, I shall be very glad to write another book about my adventures in the South Seas, but at present I will content myself by saying that although many things I saw upon this journey were new and startling to me, yet on the whole we had a good journey, and that I was paid off in Mackay when we came back, and at once took a passage in a steamer for Brisbane.



*CHAPTER XII.*

*BRISBANE—TRAVELS IN THE “NEVER  
NEVER” LAND.*



## CHAPTER XII.

BRISBANE—TRAVELS IN THE “NEVER NEVER” LAND.

I WENT on board the *Black Swan* on taking leave of the captain and my other friends on the schooner, and after an uneventful passage arrived in Brisbane. Times had altered greatly in Queensland, for the worse I thought, since I was there last. The rich people had grown richer, and the poor poorer. It is sad at the present day to walk about the town and look at all the semi-destitute people whom one sees on every side, and then think of the “booms” which used to be a few years ago. My objects in coming to Brisbane were many. I had now, as I thought, sufficient capital to establish myself in a small way at my trade, and I intended to look out for a suitable place near town where I might begin. I was also on the look-out for a wife ; but that was only in a general sense, and when all is said, I believe that what I considered most important was to enjoy myself. In any case, with over three hundred pounds in the bank I felt pretty independent and considered myself entitled to spend all I could earn so long as I could keep this nest-egg safe.



The town was busy, work was plentiful, but although I went about every night and spent all I earned, yet I by no means liked Brisbane. I do not propose to criticise the inhabitants thereof in a general way, but so far as it concerns my narrative at this point I must say a few words. I was very unsuccessful in finding any girl whom I thought might suit me for a wife, and who, at the same time, herself approved of me for a husband. The reason, as I understood it, was this : Brisbane was, and is, crammed full of young women who are glad to stand in a shop from morning to night for half-a-crown a week and find themselves. Whether such girls can or cannot make a cup of tea I do not know, but my general impression of them was that they would rather not, if they could avoid it. Then as for servant-girls, it is a common delusion to believe that they are well off in Brisbane ; the fact is that the majority of people who keep a servant both overwork her and use her as a coat-of-arms wherewith to set themselves off, and one never by any chance reads a book either in Australia or elsewhere in which a servant is spoken of as possessed of even common sense. Of course, the better class of girls will revolt at contemptuous treatment, and they are, therefore, scarce in Brisbane, and have always been. In the bush of course it is different : there the servant is not spoken of as the " slavey " and thought of as a fool, and as a consequence they are neither the one nor the other. But a tradesman in Brisbane has no opportunity what-



ever of meeting any young woman outside these circles, because the greatest possible social distinction exists between such people as, say a bank clerk, or even a grocer's clerk, and a tradesman or a labourer; so is it between a music-teacher, shop-girl, dressmaker, or a servant. I found it so, and that had a great deal to do with my dislike to Brisbane; but, apart from that, I had been so used to the free life of the bush, and more lately then to the changing scenes among the South Sea Islands, that I could not endure for long the everyday life of the shop and the boarding-house, and the boarding-house and the shop. I therefore engaged myself as carpenter to a squatter who had a large station on the Darling Downs, and right glad was I when I shook the dust of Brisbane off my feet again. But before leaving this city I should like to speak about the last piece of work I did there, because it is in such striking contrast to the state of the carpenter's trade at the present time. One Saturday morning when I came to work, my employer asked me to put a few tools in my basket and go out to his private house to perform certain work there. As I crossed Queen Street a man came running after me and asked me if I wanted a job of carpenter's work. I said "No." When I came a little further up, along George Street, a publican came running out of his door, smiling all over his face, saying I was the very man he wanted, as he could see by the basket I carried that I was a carpenter. I told

him I was not open to engagement; but he would not take "no" for an answer. After a long conversation in the street, in which he implored me to do just this little job for him that he wanted, while I explained that I was on my road to work for which I already was engaged. I was on the point of cutting it short by going away, when he asked me in any case to come into his hotel and have a glass of beer. When I came in he renewed the attack in this way—he asked me just to oblige him by looking at the work and telling him what it was worth. He then showed me a large shutter which stood under a rough window opening in the yard, and told me that all he wanted was for a man to fit this shutter to the opening and put hinges on it; he had the hinges. Now, what was it worth? I saw that he intended me to do it if he could get me, but I by no means wanted to. I said it was worth thirty shillings at the least. "All right," cried he, "do it, and I will give you thirty shillings."

I was caught now, so I gave in. I took my saw out and fitted the shutter, screwed the hinges, and took my thirty shillings, all in less than an hour. This is eleven or twelve years ago. I have not worked in Brisbane since, but I know a friend of mine who two years ago put a shilling advertisement in the papers for a carpenter to do a few days' work, and in less than half an hour after the paper was out he had thirty-two applicants! I was now working on one of the largest stations on

the Darling Downs. I had only come there in a roving sort of way, under a six months' agreement which was made in Brisbane, and I had no intention whatever of staying longer, but although the wages were less than what I could earn in Brisbane, or in any other town, I thought I should like to see a large sheep station, and I was told by the agent in town that I should be sure to like it. The property itself covered I do not know how many square miles, divided into paddocks, and in each or most of these paddocks stood a house in which the boundary rider and his family lived. The duty of this man is not fatiguing; he has to look out that the fences are in good repair and report to the head station when anything is out of order. Therefore his day's work is generally done when after breakfast he has been jogging round the boundary fence. For this work the wages are about thirty-five pounds sterling a year with double rations, a free house, use of cow, &c. These boundary riders are by no means the only employees on the station. There were general labourers, carriers, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, storekeepers, carpenters, and a host of people who came and went without my knowing they did so, but the whole formed quite a little township at the head station. Once a year, when the wool was clipped off the two hundred thousand sheep there, it was an extra busy time. Then the shearers would arrive, sixty in number, and with all their assistants they would make nearly a hundred persons. Be-



sides these there were the washers, who washed the sheep by elaborate machinery. There would be so many people that I do not know how the "boss" knew them all. Every one of them earned good money, although in various degrees. The shearers earned three shillings and sixpence for every score of sheep they could shear. An average day's work is from fifty to a hundred sheep. Then the wool-packers, who pressed the wool into bales, had also piecework, and this was a favourite job reserved as a reward for old hands. They earned at it a pound or more a day. This was of course for a short time only out of the year, but when one station is done shearing another generally begins, and the men can, therefore, keep on for at least six months at a stretch with very little lost time. The tradesmen on the station seemed all part and parcel of the station, old identities, who had made their homes there years before and did not intend to shift. I heard it whispered that the squatter meant to try and break through the monopoly that some of the old hands had created, and that some new blood might be infused, and I believe that I had been engaged to hang as the sword of Damocles over the other carpenters' heads, but I refused the rôle. The head carpenter was an old, worn-out man with a large family. He had been there seventeen years. He had one hundred pounds a year and double rations, with a free house, wood, water, and many little perquisites. I daresay he had saved a little



money, but any one may easily understand that a man over fifty years of age, with a large family and a settled home where he has been for seventeen years, does not like the prospect of change and to have to make a new start in life. Such a billet as that of tradesman on a station is much sought after, and in many respects is incomparably better than the position occupied in town by a married man who works for wages. But neither the one nor the other suited my ambition. If I had been doomed to choose between the two, I think I should, after all, have taken the lot of the man in town, for he is more independent if he is poorer. It is all very well to work for a master when one is young, but as one gets on for thirty years of age he likes to be his own master. At least that was my opinion. There seemed to me something so forbidding in the ringing of the large bell on the station. It would ring at a quarter to six on a morning for all hands to get out of bed and dress. Then it rang at six o'clock for starting work. It rang for dinner, and it rang when we were to start again. It was all correct enough; I have no fault to find with it, I cannot suggest anything better, but all the same I did not like it.

My work on the station was otherwise both pleasant and independent enough. A great deal of it consisted in making and hanging gates for the various paddocks. These would be made at home in the shop and afterwards carted out to their

places. Then I would get a labourer with me and we would drive off in a spring-cart from one gate to the other, and hang them. It was a regular journey across the paddocks, and involved about a fortnight's trip every time.

The man who earned the most money of all the employees on the station was the shearers' cook. The shearers had a large house to themselves and managed their own housekeeping, inasmuch as they engaged and paid their own cook and bought and paid for anything they liked to eat, so that they should not grumble over the provisions. But that object has never yet been attained with shearers, either with the lot on this station or any other set of shearers I have ever seen. They are the most frightful grumblers, and who is so fit an object for their displeasure as their servant—their own servant, the cook? One thing, they pay him well. The wages of a shearers' cook is the shearing price of a score of sheep per week, or three-and-sixpence a week for every shearer. You will therefore see that in a large shearing shed like this, with sixty shearers, the cook earned ten guineas per week besides his food. But for this money he had to do more than an ordinary man can do, and take more insults than an ordinary dog would tolerate. First of all, the shearers always insist on having their table spread with good things, puddings and cake every day. He had also to bake bread, chop wood, fetch water, keep the hut clean, and in short everything else that was

wanted. Nobody but the very smartest men can do it. But his work is not everything. When the bell rings for meal-time, I have seen shearers come out of the shed, making for the hut, howling at the same time: "I wonder if that —— of a cook has got that —— breakfast ready!" Everything has to stand ready for them to "rush;" and even if it does, yet one seldom hears other conversation than such as: "I say, cook, do you call them —— peas boiled? D—— you! If I had my way you should be kicked out!"

But as the majority only can dismiss their cook, he is not sent away notwithstanding, and it is quite understood that it is part of his duty to assume a respectful demeanour towards his employers. Yet, unless a cook is a good fighting man, it is not a billet that I would recommend any friend of mine to come all the way from Denmark to fill.

When I had been on the station for six months I took a trip in the train to the surrounding towns of Dalby, Toowoomba, Warwick, and Stanthorpe, with a view to seeing if there was an opening for permanent business in my line. It did not seem to me that the prospect was good enough for more than a bare living, because bad times seemed suddenly to have set in, and competition for work and contracts requiring small capital was very keen. I therefore went back to the station again and bought two horses, intending to go out west. I had my three hundred pounds safe in a Brisbane



bank, and I did not mean now to work for any employer, but to keep my eyes open as I came along and to take any opportunities for contracts that might come in my way and for which I could obtain a reasonable price.

I started from Roma, which is a town lying about 350 miles west of Brisbane and 200 miles from the station on which I then was located. It was fearfully dry weather when I started and there was not a blade of grass anywhere for the horses. I made long stages of thirty to forty miles a day, but how the horses endured it I do not know. When I camped out at night I would have to tie the horses to a tree alongside of me, as there was nothing for them in the bush to eat, and they would have rambled away never to be found again if I had let them go. All the food it was possible for me to provide for them was a little bread which I bought at the inns on the road at intervals of seventy or eighty miles, and in the mornings when I got up I would take a pillow-case I had and a knife and walk about in places where the ground was inaccessible to horses, such as the brinks of a gully or between large stones; there I would manage to find some dry, withered stuff, wherewith I filled the pillow-case and shared it between them. It was all I could do, and when I arrived in Roma they were both very far gone for hunger, and there, in town even, there was nothing for them either—the last bushel of corn had been sold for two pounds sterling. I fed them on bread,



but even that seemed like a forbidden thing. People appeared to regard the proceeding with evil eyes. Flour was scarce and getting more scarce. There was no prospect of rain, and soon all would have to starve! In St. George, which is another town 150 miles south of Roma, I was told a perfect famine was raging. For fear of being misunderstood by people who do not know much about Queensland, I would say that want of money had nothing to do with this state of things, it was only the want of rain which prevented teams from travelling and supplies from coming forward.

I left Roma again. There was nothing to do there, scarcely a prospect of getting enough to eat. I rambled away with my two horses out west, and I am now anxious, for obvious reasons, not to particularize too closely where I went.

It had now become of more importance to me to save the lives of my horses than to find anything to do for myself. I travelled for a month or more at slow stages, and was now right away in the "Never Never" country. Occasionally I would find a little for the horses to eat, but very often it was scanty fare they had. I arrived at a station where shearing was in full swing, and as both grass and water seemed more plentiful there than I had seen it for hundreds of miles, I turned the horses out for a month's spell, while I made myself comfortable in my tent and occupied myself by reading such literature as I could borrow from the shearers on the station.

Among the shearers was a man with whom I grew to be on very friendly terms. He was a big, strong, good-looking young fellow, about thirty years of age, and seemed to me at all times so polite and well-informed that I was always seeking his company. What interested me most in him was a peculiarly sad expression in his face, and I often wondered at the cause of it. When the shearing was over all the shearers went in a body to the nearest hotel, as is customary, to have a jollification. It happened to be located the way I had come, so, though they did not actually pass me, I saw them ride away, and thought it rather shabby of my acquaintance not to come and say good-bye to me. I was mistaken, however, as I shortly afterwards saw him coming up to the tent on a really good horse and leading another.

"Well," said I, "are you off? I thought you had left with the others; how is it you did not?"

"No," said he, "I know my weakness. If I had gone with them I should probably have got on the spree and drunk all I possess. But I am now already pretty well-to-do, because I have a cheque for over thirty pounds and these two horses besides. All I want is just another shed, and then I will make tracks for Ipswich where my people live."

"But," said I, "there is a public-house this way too."

"Ah, yes," cried he, and winked, "but they do not catch me this time. I have worked for the

publicans for seven years, but I will never enter such a place again."

With that we parted, and two or three days after I got my horses up and followed along the same road that he had taken. About noon I came to the hotel. I did not intend to go in because the money I had with me was getting scarce and I did not wish to draw on what I had in the bank. I carried, too, all sorts of necessaries on my horses and wanted for nothing. But when the publican saw me passing the door, he came running out.

"Good-morning, young fellow ; good-morning. By Jove, that is a splendid horse you have there. Are you travelling far ? Surely you don't mean to take your horses along in this weather. Why it is too hot for a white man, too hot entirely. Come in and have a bit of dinner ; it is all ready. I won't charge you ; I never charged a b—— man for a feed yet. I do not think it right, do you ?".

Pressed in this way, I went inside ; but my suspicions that was a robbers' den in disguise were aroused, and if I had not felt sure of myself I should probably have preferred to dash the spurs into the horses and tear away ; but although I thanked him for his hospitality and agreed with him that it was very wrong to charge a man for food, yet I made up my mind that he would have to be clever to outwit me. On the verandah sat a forbidding-looking man on his swag, and I saw at once that he was a poor swagsman who need have



no fear of being robbed. In the bar were three men standing drinking, but yet moderately sober. The publican began to bustle about behind the bar. I kept one eye on him and one on the horses. Scarcely five minutes had elapsed before a blackfellow made his appearance outside, and began to lead my horses away. I went outside and took them from him.

"Are you taking my horses away?" cried I; "don't do it again." I used a little more persuasion, but it does not look well in print.

"Master said I take him Yarraman along-a-paddock," whined the blackfellow.

Now the publican came out again.

"What is the matter?" cried he. "I told him to take and give the horses a feed; they look as if they needed it."

"Not at all," said I; "they have had a month's spell, and I can scarcely hold them."

"All right, you know best. Are you going to have a drink?"

"Yes," I said, "I don't mind."

"What is it going to be?"

"Rum," said I.

"Right you are. I almost thought you were a teetotaler."

I watched him closely, and saw he picked out a particular glass, and before I let him fill it I took my handkerchief up and wiped it carefully all around the inside. I looked at him and he at me while I did it. I also noticed that he tapped the



compound from the ordinary cask, and I was therefore not afraid to swallow it, nor did it do me any harm. The reason I was so careful to wipe the glass was that I knew it to be a common trick of dishonest publicans, when they see a man coming along the road whom they wish to catch, to take a dirty pipe and blow some of the thick, foul-smelling stuff that it contains into an empty glass, and then have it ready for the customer. A very little dose will make the strongest man intoxicated for the whole day, and if it is not nicely adjusted, but just a speck too much, it will knock a man down in a dead swoon for many hours. I had been told this on the gold diggings by more than one person at the time I kept shanty there myself, and I knew that there were people who travelled about the country selling to publicans the secrets of tricking and falsifying spirits. I, therefore, knew pretty well where to look for danger, and where I might take the risk; but now dinner was announced, and we all went into the dining-room. On the floor of the room I saw a man who was lying there smeared all over with blood and filth. Still I recognized him at once as my friend the shearer. I went up and shook him until I got a little life into him, and he sat up and recognized me. "Hullo," bawled he, "is that you? Ain't I a fool? Publican, give me my horses, I want to go with this young fellow. I am going away this afternoon. Don't go away without me."

"All right," said the publican; "I will see to

get the black boy to find your horses for you, but he says one has got out of the paddock."

Then we had dinner—that is, I had a good meal ; but the drunken shearer could not touch food, and presented a terrible picture of sickness and misery. By this time I was not on good terms with the publican ; but I did not care. I only studied how I could get the other poor fellow away, and I could not as yet see any way. As soon as we came from the table he staggered into the bar and called for drinks for all hands. The publican then called his wife, four or five children, a seamstress, the servant-girl, myself, the man in the yard, the black boy, the bushman I had seen, the traveller on the verandah, who had had no dinner, and himself, and they all had their drinks ! It was a shilling a glass. Then the shearer asked him to be kind and let him have the balance of his cheque, which, it appeared, he had given the publican to change for him when he came ; but that good Samaritan simply told him that he would not do such a thing, as he was too drunk to take care of money. When he went away he should have it. The shearer, who was getting more intoxicated again after this last glass, hung over the counter, and, in a plaintive sort of way, cried, "I am a —— fool ! Never mind, let's have another. Here, fill 'em up again."

I could do no good, so I went away without paying for my dinner. I met the shearer two years after, when he told me all about it. It

appeared that he had tried to pass the place in the same manner as I, and that the publican had persuaded him to come in. He had not liked to take his dinner for nothing, and had given the publican the cheque he had for changing. He had been promised the money in half an hour, but was shortly after intoxicated, and had never been able to get either the horses or the money again. After having been in the state I saw him for about three weeks, the publican presented him with a bill, from which it appeared that he owed him for "refreshments" more than the amount of the cheque added to the value of horses, saddles, and bridles. The publican had, therefore, kept the horses, but had kindly given him a bottle of grog to take with him on the road when he went away! This process is called in bush parlance, "lambing down," and is going on every day, year after year!

I had not gone far from the hotel before I saw a man coming after me. He called me to stop, which I did, and when he came closer I perceived that it was the man who had been sitting on his swag in the verandah at the hotel. He said he had come after me because he had neither rations nor money, and did not know how to get along the road unless I would be good enough to let him travel with me. He wanted to go to —— station, and try to get some shearing to do. It happened that I intended to turn off the road about half a mile further on, and that according to the place to which he said he was going we



should travel in almost opposite directions, and I told him so. I said also that if he was pushed I would help him with a few rations, but that I had not time to accommodate the pace of the horses to his walk, as I had already been travelling for a much longer time than I liked. Of course he said he would be glad of anything, and so I got off the horse and had a fire lighted, by which we made some tea, and he had his dinner out of my provisions. After the meal he suddenly made up his mind that he might as well go the same road as I, and try to get a job at a station which we should pass some forty miles from where we then stood. I did not like this much, because he seemed to me a man whose company I should not appreciate, but, as the loneliness of the bush always appeared to me to engender a sort of fellowship towards whoever is there, I did not find it easy nor did I deem it right to say I would have nothing to do with him. On the contrary, I said that we would push on together then for the day, and that I would walk while he put his swag on my saddle-horse. In this way we now went several miles, and my travelling companion had very little to say. He seemed to know the road to perfection, and about four o'clock in the afternoon he suggested that we should camp at a certain spot at which we had arrived, but about a hundred yards off the road. I objected. I said he was free himself to camp or not as he chose, but if he wanted to travel with me he would have



to walk a good deal further, as I had by no means come as far yet as I considered a day's journey required. After that we started again, but my new friend seemed frightfully morose, and had not a word to say. As the horse he held was a better leader than mine he gradually forged ahead of me, and try as I would I could not keep up with him. I was just wishing myself well rid of him when I saw him suddenly turn off the road, leading the horse after him, and although I called again and again, he neither turned round nor answered me until he came to a deep water-hole about a mile off the road. Here he took the load off the horse, and hobbled it out. I was not only angry, but I was also to a certain extent afraid. I had already agreed with myself that I could not lie down to sleep alongside of him ; but what, of all things, did he mean by leading me to this place ? As soon as I came up I asked him what he meant, and how he dared to take my horse off the road. I had taken the bridle belonging to the saddle-horse to go and catch it again, for I intended now at all hazards to get rid of him. At this juncture he came towards me.

"Here is grass, and here is water," cried he, and out of this spot shall neither I nor any — German or — Dutchman come to-night. Let go that bridle !"

Then he grasped the bridle. You know the old proverb that "There is a time when patience ceases to be a virtue," and in my opinion that

time had now arrived. I had not been so long in Queensland without learning to defend myself, so I closed with him. What a fearful struggle we had! As far as I was concerned, I felt as if it was a struggle for life, and I fought accordingly. Now we were up, now down. Sometimes I was on the top of him and sometimes I was under, but whatever happened I must not give in, because I felt sure I should receive small mercy if I did. At last I had him. My hands were round his throat, and my knees on his chest, while I felt his hands slide powerless off me. It was not victory yet. If I let him go he might renew the attack, so I pressed his throat until he was nearly black in the face, and I sat on him as heavily as I could, because I was angry, and when at last I let him go, it was not before I thought I had taken all his fighting humour out of him. While I loaded my horse again I called him all the names I thought it probable would insult him most, in case he might have any honour and shame in him, and at last I threw his swag at his head and cried, "There, you old loafer!"

Then I got on the horse and rode away; nor did I stop that night before I had put fully twenty miles between him and me.

I was now following down the — River, towards the town of —, which I was anxious to reach as soon as possible. The weather had so far continued fearfully dry, and the heat was every day intense, but when I was within ninety miles

of the township it began to rain. It rained as if it intended to make up for a two years' drought. The river I followed was nothing but a dry sand-bed when the rain began, but in three or four days it became a roaring torrent. I saw that we were in for a first-class flood and became anxious, as the country on which I was camped seemed to me very flat. Just as I had made up my mind that such was the case I met a party of stockmen, or, more correctly, they came to my tent. They had been out helping to shift some shepherds and their sheep to rising ground, and they assured me that the place I was in would be flooded. As they directed me to what they thought a safe spot, I shifted my tent at once to that place. It was a low, narrow ridge about a mile from the river. Here I prepared myself to weather it out. Next morning when I got up, I saw the river much nearer than the evening before. During the day it rose on all sides, and before evening again I was a complete prisoner on about ten acres of land, while the water roared and hissed on all sides of me as far as the eye could reach. This state of affairs lasted about three weeks. Anything more appallingly lonely than to sit there in the tent, and look out on the awe-inspiring sight of the flood with its swiftly running, destructive water cannot be conceived. As I had but little room for exercise in my prison I could not sleep at night, and so I would sit and sing or play on the flute, and think of all sorts of things. The waters did not go down

at the same time as the rain ceased, and I had it all to myself some beautiful moonlight nights. I had heard the stockmen speak about an old shepherd who, with his sheep, was camped on a sort of island, which was formed by the river opposite the place I was in, and about a mile and a half distant. He was, therefore, my nearest neighbour. I could hear him at night sometimes felling trees for exercise, and occasionally he would answer me when I cooeed. Little did it matter to him whether the flood was on or not. At ordinary times he would probably never see any one for weeks or months, as no one could have any business there excepting the ration-carrier once a week, and the shepherd, as a rule, did not see him, as he was away with his sheep when the carrier arrived in his hut. I used to speculate as to who he was—an old man, with wife and family dead, perhaps. What a sad existence! Or, worse still, an old bachelor, crusty and tired. Surely he would have some one he longed to see, and who longed for him! How many years, thought I, had he been there, or in places like that? What did he do with his money when he got it once a year? Would he go with it to the nearest hotel, and as he saw other men wonder why they were not as glad to see him as he to see them? Would he purchase their good-will with grog? What else could he do, or was he likely to do? Anyhow, when it was all spent, and he would get angry when people would have no more to do with him, would



he be kicked out? Would he then come back here for another year? What else could he do? I have, among shepherds, seen many men who must have been what is called well educated. They count in their ranks both lawyers and parsons, but disappointed and embittered silence is generally the stamp of them all. Sometimes the reverse is the case; then they will talk as if they could never stop. I like solitude myself to a certain extent, but it must surely be an unnatural life for any man to lead quite alone in the bush.

When at last the floods subsided I had the greatest trouble in making my way, because there would be the most treacherous boggy holes where one least expected them. I had also fared hard on very short rations, so as to make what I had last until I could purchase more, and when I started away from my camping-place I had only one more loaf of bread; all the rest was gone. I was, therefore, very sorry to hear at the nearest station that they would sell me nothing whatever, and when I came to the next one again it was just as bad. I travelled for some days in this way, and had had scarcely what would make half a meal for each day, when at last I arrived at a place only twenty-four miles from town where I should have to cross the river—if I could—so as to get on the main road leading into the settlement. It was about ten o'clock in the morning when I neared this place. It was only a small cattle station, but I thought that whatever happened I must try to get some

rations here. I came along at a pretty brisk gallop, but when I was about twenty chains from the houses which formed the place my horses shied violently at a man who was lying in the middle of the road. I was, on the spur of the moment, put out of temper, and began to rate the fellow for choosing his camping-place there.

"Oh, let me lie!" he cried. "Accursed be the day I came to Queensland! I have laid myself down to die here. Shall I not be allowed to lie? Leave me alone. O God, O God!"

I looked closer at him. It seemed that he was in earnest, and the wonder was that he was not dead already, as he was lying there in the terrible sun without the least attempt to get into the shade. He was a short, slightly built man and had a terribly emaciated, woe-begone face. It took a long time and much persuasion before I could get him to tell me what was the matter. Then he said he was dying from hunger. "Pshaw," I said, "right here in front of the station! I am hungry too, but in half an hour I shall be back to you with something to eat."

He laughed bitterly. "Have you got it with you?" said he. "No; but I have money, and I will buy some up here." "You might save yourself the trouble to ask for it," said he; "you will get nothing." "Why," cried I, "I will tell them that a man is dying with hunger outside the door." "They know it. The squatter hunted me yesterday when I told him that I could not cross the

river or get further without food. Oh, accursed Queensland, and the day I saw it first! Let me lie; I only want to die."

I could not understand it, and I came to the conclusion that it must be the man's own fault, and that the people on the station had no idea about the despairing state he was in. I looked at the river. It was swollen yet, and not fordable on foot, but I had no fear but that I could get over with the horses, and I was, therefore, in a position to promise him that he should be with me in town that same evening. On hearing that he brightened up a little, but I was myself so hungry that I thought I would go up to the station and get some food for both of us. I therefore hobbled out the pack-horse after the swag was off him, and rode up to the place, promising my despairing friend to be back to him with all possible speed. When I came into the yard my horse made a dead stop outside an old stable. I got off, and looking into the stable saw another man lying on his face in one of the stalls. "Halloa," thought I, "it appears that all the people here are off their legs!" and I sang out to him, asking him whether he was dying of hunger too. "No; but I am blind," said he. "Who is that?" I told him I was a traveller, and that I just wanted to buy a few rations. "It is not you who were here yesterday?" inquired he. "No," said I, "that poor fellow is lying out in the road, and says he is dying for hunger. Surely it has not come to that!" "I

was awfully sorry for that man yesterday," cried he, "and only that I cannot see at all, for I got the sand-blight a fortnight ago, I should have given him something." Then, as with a sudden inspiration, he said, "Are you his mate?" No, I was not his mate, I was only sorry for him and very hungry myself. "Will you swear you will give him the half of what I will give you?" Yes, I would swear. "All right! Then look in that other stall there under the bags and you will find a piece of bread, but remember he is to have the half." "Yes, yes," cried I, while I looked under the bags and found about half a pound of stale bread. "But are you really so very hard up here? Surely you must have plenty of beef." "So we have," said he, "but I have been blind for two weeks and cannot kill a beast if we run out, and the super himself is a bad hand. We are nearly out of flour and everything else, and there is a party of fencers cut off by the flood that we expect in now every day. We must keep something for them; still, that super is a skunk, or he would have given the man a piece of beef, but he won't give anything or sell either, so there is an end to it. You might save yourself the trouble of asking him. Are you gone?" "No," said I, "I am here yet. I am only looking at an old grey-bearded man who is coming out of the house and putting a saddle on a horse." "That is he." "Is he the only one at the place besides yourself?" "Yes, unless you reckon the old



woman in the kitchen." "Could I not get round her after he is away?" "Not you; you will get nothing out of either of them."

I then went up to the squatter and saluted him. Would he kindly sell a few rations? "No, I will do nothing of the sort," cried he. "You do not know how short we are here. I have got no rations." "But," said I, "you surely do not know that there is a man lying out there on the road who says that he is dying of hunger. Just sell me a piece of beef." "Dying of hunger. Ha! ha! ha! that is too good. Why, he is a regular loafer. He was here for rations a fortnight ago, and he was here yesterday. Let him go into town. I cannot keep him."

"That is all very well," said I, "and I cannot pretend to say what the man is. But how can you get to town, when you cannot cross the river? He told me he has been lying about in all this rain and flood, and the wonder to me is that he is not dead already." "Is that your horse?" inquired he, pointing to where I left it standing. "Yes." "Well, then, just take my advice and get into town yourself." "And won't you sell me a piece of meat?" "No." "Not if a man were dying of hunger?" "Don't talk to me about dying of hunger. It is too rich, it is indeed! Good-morning." With that he rode away, and left me standing there meditating upon what he had said and at free liberty to decide in my own mind whether, after all, I had any right to

expect people in a place like that to provide the necessaries of life for travellers.

But one cannot argue with the stomach, and, ravenously hungry as I was, my sympathy was with myself and with the man whom I left out on the road, and I therefore thought I would make one more attack, this time on the old woman in the kitchen, who, during my conversation with the super, had twice come round the corner to empty slops, and who, I suppose, as a mark of the respect in which she held me, had thrown them so close to me that it had sprinkled me all over. She did not look very hospitable, but I had at that time great faith in my power to charm the fair sex, or, as Englishmen less gallantly call them, the weaker sex. I, therefore, wreathed my face in smiles and put myself into the most graceful position I could assume, while I knocked at the kitchen door. No one answered my knock, so I went inside, still retaining my charming appearance. On the other side of the kitchen stood a row of saucepans with something cooking in them, which emitted an odour that did not go far to prove the theory of want raging in the place. Here is my luck again, thought I, I will get a good meal at last. The old lady now came running in from one of the rooms—a most forbidding object to make love to! “You can’t get no rations here,” cried she. “Clear out of the kitchen!” Then she took up a piece of firewood and struck at me with it. How could any one expect me to look happy under the

circumstances? I knew I was getting to look ugly. Then I pulled out my large knife and rolled my eyes in my head. That seemed to please her. She now only mildly protested, while I took the lid off one of the saucepans and lifted out five or six pounds of meat, with which I made my escape. When I came out with this to the traveller on the road his joy was a pleasure to look at. He could not understand how I had got it. So weak was he that he cried like a baby.

The tea, of which I had yet a supply, was made, and then the feast began. I counselled him not to eat too much, but between the two of us there was scarcely anything left when we were both satisfied. Then he began to tell me his story, of which I can only give the general outlines as I have forgotten the details; but a more terrible tale of misery I had never heard, and any one who will fill in the picture for himself might easily understand that he must have suffered almost enough to justify him in lying down to die at last, when all hope seemed gone.

He said that travelling along he had been overtaken by the flood, and had camped by himself in a similar place to the one where I had been a prisoner, only with this difference—that he had had no tent. He had managed to keep a log on fire all the time, and had hung his blanket over a pole to form a fly, but of course he had been as wet all the time as if he had been hauled out of the sea. By the time the water went down he had eaten every

scrap of provision he had, but had nevertheless reached this station about a fortnight since. Here, as already stated, they would neither sell nor give him anything. He could not cross the river to get into town, so, in a terrible condition from hunger, he had turned back in another direction, some twenty miles or more to where there was another small station. The country was all flooded on his way, and for five miles in one stretch he had waded through water to his shoulders, only being able to know the direction in which he wanted to go by following along a fence, the top of the posts of which were out of water. I forget how long it took him to reach this place, but when he did arrive there it was only to be told that he could get nothing. Being apparently the sort of man who would bend his neck to any stroke of misfortune, he had meekly turned away, he did not know himself whither, when by good luck as the issue proved, he had fainted when close to the house. A man had then come out and given him something to eat, besides a little to take with him, and had told him that twenty-five miles in another direction was a place where he could procure supplies. He had gone thither, but as the people there had proved but one degree more merciful than their neighbours, they had only kept him alive a couple of days, and then started him back here to where I found him. All his money was seven shillings. The squatter here, as already stated, would neither sell nor give him anything,



and as he saw he could not cross the river for several days on foot, not being able to swim, he had laid himself down to die when I arrived on the scene. While he told me all this, he was gradually getting very sick. The sweat hung in large drops on his pale face, and he threw himself about writhing in agony. I need scarcely say, perhaps, that he had eaten with less moderation than he ought. I bustled about him, trying or wishing to do him good, but I did not know how. I was also very anxious for us both to be off, because I heard the squatter fire a gun in the yard, and I concluded that he had come back and that the old woman had told him what had happened perhaps, or most likely drawn on her imagination at the same time. As the bishop said when he saw a criminal on the road to the scaffold: "But for the grace of God, there go I." The reader of this truthful narrative may decide for himself who deserved hanging most—the squatter or I; but whatever the opinion may be, I had undoubtedly committed robbery under arms, and, in my opinion, the man who would see another die outside his door if he had it in his power to save him, might also add such small particulars to the tale as would make his case strong and interesting—especially as there was a lady in the case. I had doubtless committed a crime which, according both to the spirit and the letter of Queensland law as among the greatest for which a criminal is punished. Just imagine how the case might have appeared

in court. There the old grey-bearded super, the worthy pioneer, and the interesting, inoffensive old lady, who in a fainting condition, would tell her horrible tales; here a fat, bouncing Crown Prosecutor; and lastly the two loafers in the dock, whom nobody knew or would have believed. As after events proved, the super was either too much of a gentleman or too much of a coward, as he neither came out and remonstrated with me nor prosecuted me afterwards.

Six weeks after this event happened I was an employer of over a dozen men, and as time went on I was looked upon as a rising man in that town toward which I was now going, and no one thought themselves too good to know me. Among my acquaintances was this same super. He did not at all recollect me from this adventure; but one day I reminded him, and told him what I thought about him.

Begging the reader's pardon for this digression, I will return to where we still sat in the road. While I, for the above-named reasons, perhaps not clearly defined in my mind, was anxious to be off, and my travelling companion was writhing with pain before me, an accident happened which I at the time thought one of the greatest possible misfortunes. My best horse—my saddle-horse—got drowned in the river. It came about in this way: ever since the flood the air had been thick with countless millions of sand-flies; it was so bad that one could scarcely exist unless when sitting with

the head over a fire enveloped in smoke. The horses suffered fearfully from their attacks, and just then they both became as it were quite maddened, and galloped straight for the river. I managed to catch the one, but the other, as if it premeditated suicide, jumped right in, and being hobbled could not well drown just then, but was swept down the current and away. Next morning we had eaten all our provisions and were as hungry as ever. The river, however, was falling fast. I got on the one horse and tried the river in several places, but nowhere was it so low that the horse could walk across. I could get across myself on the horse, but it reared and bucked when the other man tried to climb on it too ; as he could not ride he began his lamentations again, imploring me not to leave him behind. I had no idea of doing that, but it cost me not a little trouble to think out what was best to do. Unfortunately neither of us could swim, and as he was of very short stature, the river would have to fall until he could walk over almost dry-footed before he would dare to attempt it. I was a head taller than he, and as the day went on I kept walking in the river and trying it with a long pole to find the shallowest place. The current was very strong, but the water was falling fast, and tired out by my companion's lamentations and the whole misery of the situation, I told him that we would a couple of hours before sundown try to cross the river or die. It was a dangerous undertaking, because not only

was the water still very deep, and I had only a general idea of it being fordable, but the current was so strong that I did not know whether I should be able to keep on my feet when I came to the deepest part. First of all I wrote a few words in pencil to the manager of the bank in which I had my money, telling him what to do with my account in case I should not claim it. After having put it into an envelope, because I always carried these things, I gave it to my fellow-traveller, and without letting him know what it contained, exacted from him a promise that he should post it in case I got drowned. It was the least he could do certainly, because as a reward I said he might have all the rest of my belongings, always supposing, of course, that I should have no further use for them. Then I helped him on to the horse, and told him just to sit still until he saw me safe on the other side, and that the horse would come to me when I called it as long as he did not pull it about. Having done all this, I took off all my clothes and strapped them on to the pack-saddle, and lifted the whole burden on to my head so as to give me extra weight. I also got a pole about fifteen feet in length to stand against, and then I faced the river. The river was not very broad—I should say about three chains. From the side where I was it gradually sloped towards its deepest part which was near the other side, and there was at least one chain in width where I did not exactly know the depth more than that the



horse so far had had to swim across earlier in the day when I had tried it. The river was still falling every hour, and I was determined for both of us to get across then. I waded into the water, and it all went well until I came to the middle. Somehow I thought I must have got to shallower ground than where I had tried it before. The water rushed round my sides, and every time I had to lift the pole and put it forward it took me all my strength to do it. The last step forward had brought me into still deeper water, and my strength seemed exhausted—perhaps it would be more correct to say that to hold the pole in position and keep myself on my feet demanded as much force as I ever had. I seemed to stand dancing on the top of the big toe while I could feel with the other foot that it was still deeper in front of me. I pressed on the pole to keep me down, but I felt that I had neither strength nor pluck enough to shift it either forwards or backwards, nor even to keep standing where I was very long. Yet how tantalizing; in front of me, just another step, and I might grasp the boughs of a large tree hanging out over the water. And must I die there?

As in a panorama my whole life seemed to pass before me in review: At home—my schoolmates, I saw them all—then Hamburg—the emigrant ship—Thorkill—the gold-diggings—the South Seas—Brisbane—all along this miserable journey and back where I stood. I turned my head and looked

behind me to where the Englishman sat on my horse. He laughed loud an unpleasant ha! ha! ha! ha! It was his way to cheer me on, but it jarred on my ear. My heart began to beat as if it would burst. Have you travelled so far, I thought, and have you seen and suffered so many things on purpose only to drown in this muggy stream? Never! I gathered myself together for a supreme effort. I threw the pole from me, rushed forward, rolled, lost the saddle, but grasped a bough, and the next moment I climbed up the other side, when I fainted for the first and only time in all my life. When I recovered the other man had come over and stood alongside of me with my horse. We intended to travel all night, so as to be in town as soon as possible, and my friend seemed quite gay at the prospect before us. Where we stood, however, was only on a sort of by-road, and I understood that the main road to —— was a couple of miles distant. I, therefore, suggested to my companion that he should walk off as fast as he could, while I was pulling myself a little together, and that I would overtake him on the horse before it got dark. But—I had not got a stitch of clothes to put on! and I had to ask him to let me have some of his. Then he began to talk while he pulled his swag open. He had only two shirts and two pairs of breeches that he had paid fourteen shillings for in Liverpool, but of course I should have them. Were they worth ten shillings? Was the shirt worth five shillings? I

would not get the like under eight shillings. If I thought it was too much, I might have the breeches he had on for five shillings.

I was completely amazed. Was this the man for whom I had risked my life, and as nearly as possible lost it? For whom—call it what you like—I had begged and taken by force at the station what I thought necessary to save his life? For whom I had lost my horse which had carried me so many hundred miles, and the saddle and all my clothes? Here I sat as naked as the day I was born, all to save his life, and my reward was to see him in front of me; but he had not perception enough to know that he owed me anything. The money I had—three or four pounds—I had on purpose taken out of the swag before I crossed the river, and given to him so that it might not be unnecessarily lost. I had, therefore, that, but I wondered whether he would give me any clothes without money if I had none, or whether, if so, I would have to force them from him. I asked him, and said, "What if I have no money?" "Oh, but you have," said he; "I saw in your purse you have plenty of money." Then I bought the clothes and paid him what he asked for his breeches, for which he had given fourteen shillings in Liverpool. I bought his shirt also for five shillings, and a dirty, nasty towel he had was thrown in as a present for me to wind round my head instead of a hat.

Then he went away quite happy, asking me not to

be long behind, as he was to ride half-way on my horse, and I dressed myself in my new clothes. I did look a terrible picture. The breeches were six inches too short, the shirt would not button round my throat, I had neither socks nor boots—and then the towel as a turban round the head ! The horse fairly snorted at me with terror. I sat where I was till it was nearly dark. I had no wish to see the other fellow any more. But I made a vow, never, if it was possible to avoid it, would I travel like this again. But I was in dejected spirits—not, I believe, so much for what money value I had lost, or for any fear that I could not put a stop to this sort of travelling about almost whenever I liked, but for the conduct of that man. As I rode along I kept saying to myself, “It shall be a valuable lesson.” Still, I fear that that sort of lessons are generally more sad than valuable.

It was now all but dark, and when I had ridden so far as to make me wonder that there was no sign of the main road yet, I got off the horse and began to look closely at the track along which I had come. I then found that it was only a cattle track, and that the horse must have left the right road without my noticing it. Then I began to run the tracks of the horse back again. But the tracks were confusing, crossing and re-crossing each other so much that I lost my cue, and by the time it was quite dark I stood in dense brigalow scrub and had to acknowledge myself lost. I tied the horse to a tree and sat down



alongside. It was no use to walk about further before daylight. I had a general idea where the town was lying, but I knew there were no houses or people living between where I was and there. I was also afraid that if I did not strike the road I might pass the town within half a mile and not know it. As for making back for the river and station, that would be out of the question, because it would have made me no better off. But on the whole I was not afraid that I should be unable to find my way somewhere, the question was really—how long could I keep up without food? The idea occurred to me that I could at all events eat the horse as a last extremity, but I drove the thought away as soon as it came. To be there, and look up at the horse—my only friend—and to think that I intended to kill it, seemed to me both criminal and impossible. I sat the whole night smoking my pipe and waiting for the sun to rise so that I might take the bearings of the country, and make up my mind in which direction I would look for the road and town.

At sunrise I started, leading the horse after me, because it was no use now to follow the cattle tracks, and where I had to go was through the brigalow, where I had quite work enough to do in twining in and out among the trees and the brambles. As the day wore on I came into country a little more open, but yet I could not ride among the trees. The sun shone with terrible force, and the sand-flies followed us in clouds.

There was a ringing sound in my ears. I kept arranging and rearranging the towel on my head ; still, I feared that I had sunstroke, or that something serious was the matter with me. The air seemed full of phantoms—vicious-looking creatures. Then I saw a whole army of ladies and gentlemen riding past, jeering me and lolling out their tongues at me. I knew it was delusions, and I kept walking as fast and, as it proved, as straight as possible, but still I felt myself laughing, crying, and yelling at all these phantoms or at the unoffending horse.

“Shoeskin,” cried I to the horse, “you old dog, do you know that it was to save you from hunger’s dread that I went on this journey? And now you have enough to eat, while I must die of hunger! but to-night I will kill you—do you know that? Oh, Peter, Peter! is it not strange, so vicious as you have got to be? Holloa, is that a frying-pan over there on that log? So it is; and full of fried eggs and potatoes. Good luck. Look at him eating it all. Stop, you rascal! No, it is a woman. Do you call yourself a lady? You are no woman at all; only a devil. It is all devilry. Peter, take no notice.” About noon I had a bath in a water-hole I came to, and ate some snails I found in the water. After that I felt somewhat better, and shortly after I came on to the road. I became quite collected in my mind at once, and jumping on to the horse tore away at full gallop for the town, which proved to be only five or six

miles distant. As I came riding up the street at a sharp trot I knew myself to be quite sane, but I had a suspicion that I looked very much the other way with the towel round my head and the short tartan plaid breeches.







*CHAPTER XIII.*

*THE END.*



## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE END.

WITH this John Gilpin's ride the present part of my adventures, which are contained in the manuscript I wrote to my father, comes to an end. So does practically what I care to publish. I have seen many ups and downs since then, but from this point in my narrative I could no longer lay claim to be a "missing friend." I am not a novel writer, and I could not continue the history of my life and still preserve my *incognito* unless I wrote fiction. As my object in publishing these papers is to give a faithful picture of Australian life, I should feel very doubtful of attaining the desired end. To the reader who has kindly followed me so far, I would say that he may believe that Australia is full of young men who, like myself at that time, travel about from place to place, and that similar scenes to those I have described happen every day in all parts of Queensland. If I have been able to rouse the reader's interest and sympathy with myself in these pages, I shall feel proud, and think that after all I did not travel and suffer so many hardships in vain.



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